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Jewish Tourism to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and its Effects on Diaspora Identities and Politics

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The deployment of tourism to strengthen diaspora ties is well documented, however sociologists have yet to examine the use of tourism to complicate transnational diaspora allegiances. Jewish tourism to the Palestinian Territories offers a compelling case to study this growing trend, as more non-Israeli Jews are foregoing standard trips to Israel and instead visiting sites in Israel/Palestine that challenge dominant Zionist narratives. Using a mixed methods approach that combines pre/post tour surveys with longitudinal in-depth interviews, I investigate how this emerging form of tourism shapes participants' political views, identities, and activism. I find that tourists often experience significant ideological tension when they criticize a base country, while still seeing themselves as part of its national collective. However, rather than compel participants to sever their ties to the base country (Israel), this tension can actually lead to increased engagement on the part of the diaspora member, even when it is in the form of activism directed against the state. Jewish tourism to the Palestinian Territories appears to facilitate this kind of diasporic tension, while also causing participants to "humanize" a previously demonized population, Palestinians. Though such "humanization" does not always lead to overt changes in political views, it influences

participants' willingness to embrace counter national narratives. These results suggest that this unique form of "homeland" tourism can engender political criticism within diaspora populations, while simultaneously solidifying transnational ties. It is this contradictory process - solidifying ties to a base country while promoting political criticism of it - that I discuss in my thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

> "You go on the tour and you realize that these are two antithetical things, and you can either be a moral person or a pro-Israeli person. I mean which one did I want to be? I had never questioned it before… it made me feel wrong about myself, about part of my upbringing, and about what I believe."
>
> –Louis, May 20, 2014

A group of Jewish college students from the United States are standing nervously at a checkpoint in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). They are packed, shoulder-to-shoulder with hundreds of Palestinians, crammed between metal fencing and barbed wire. Israeli soldiers pace ominously above them in their security towers, their M-16s aiming directly at the group. Israeli flags with the Star of David featured prominently in the middle wave from the tops of the towers. This is the first time these young Jews find themselves on the other side of the wall,[1] and by extension on the "other side" of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For many of these tourists, their upbringings involved reciting the Israeli national anthem, writing letters of support to Israeli soldiers, and dressing up in Israeli army uniforms at Jewish summer camp. Now that these Jewish-Americans suddenly find themselves on the receiving end of Israel's military occupation, their relationship to Zionism and their understandings of their Jewish identities will probably never be the same.

This snapshot is an example of what many young Jews experience when they participate in an alternative tour to the OPT. Jewish tourism to the land of Israel has a long history that predates the founding of the modern Israeli state. For centuries, Jews from across the world have been traveling to the region to explore their ancestral roots and connect with their Jewish identities (Kelner 2010). Recently however, a growing number of Jews living

[1] This refers to Israel's separation barrier, which is being built around and through the West Bank, further restricting Palestinian movement and usurping 9.4% of West Bank land http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/features/barrier-monitoring-unit?id=908

outside of Israel are traveling to the OPT to meet Palestinians and to engage with perspectives that challenge unconditional Jewish support for the Israeli state.

Prior to Israel's establishment in 1948, Jewish identity relied less heavily on nationalist forms of identification (i.e., Zionism), and centered instead on religious and cultural understandings of Judaism (Gitelman 1998). As Sand (2012) explains, a collective longing for possessive ownership of a Jewish ancestral homeland was practically non-existent throughout the majority of Jewish history. However since the rise of Zionism in the late 19th century, Jews increasingly understand their Jewishness through their relationship to political Zionism. For many European Jews, this identification sprang or intensified following the rise of the Nazi Party and the start of World War II, and for Jews in North America and the Middle East after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 (Sand 2012).

Presently, slightly less than half of the world's Jewish population lives in Israel, with the largest majority of non-Israeli Jews residing in North America (DellaPergola 2014). These American Jews, along with Jews mainly from Europe, Latin America, and Russia frequently travel to Israel on programs that are intended to strengthen ethno-national ties and elicit political and financial support from participants. Many programs also operate under the goal of encouraging "*aliyah*," the Hebrew word for "going up," which refers to Jewish immigration to Israel.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on Jewish tourism to Israel by highlighting a relatively new type of Jewish travel that breaks with mainstream heritage and religious tours. While in the past, most Jews have traveled to Israel/Palestine to reaffirm and strengthen their connection to Jewish history and nationalism; a growing number of non-Israeli Jews are visiting Israel and the OPT to engage with criticism of Zionism and the

Israeli state. Through a case study on a tour program called Walls2Windows, I investigate this emerging form of Jewish tourism that seeks to complicate rather than strengthen Jewish ethno-national ties to Israel. The Walls2Windows program targets Jewish tourists who have finished participating in a traditional, nationalistic tour, and brings them to the OPT to hear Palestinian voices and witness the conditions of life under occupation. The goal of these tours is to disrupt mainstream Jewish national narratives and to engender greater support for Palestinians' human rights.

I investigate these alternative tours not only to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Jewish tourism to Israel, but also to address a new development in the wider field of diaspora tourism. While the use of tourism to strengthen national ties is widely documented, the deployment of tourism to critique transnational diaspora allegiances has yet to be studied. Scholars do not yet know what happens when travel to a "diaspora homeland" is conducted in the context of political criticism that intentionally challenges dominant nationalist discourses. Studying this phenomenon sheds light on a number of questions: How do people sustain ethnic and cultural ties while distancing themselves from the political and national aspects of their collective identity? Is tourism an effective tool to elicit criticism of exclusionary national narratives and political discourse? And can a single travel experience spark political dissent and activism? By looking at this new strand of tourism in the context of Jewish national identity, I probe how tourism, in general, cultivates and challenges group solidarities and transforms political allegiances, while also addressing larger issues of how nationalism may be reimagined to foster greater commitments to diversity and equality.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 IDENTITY

"Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another." (Boyarin and Boyarin 2003, p. 109)

Jewish tourists to the OPT actively pursue information that contradicts some of the most foundational, but also the most fragile, elements of Jewish national identity, or Zionism. By looking into the processes of identity construction and change that these tourists experience, this thesis focuses not on what holds our identities within the bounds of stable, bordered categories, but what information and which experiences may be able to break these identities apart so that they can be rebuilt along the lines of more just and inclusive approaches to nationalism. While this thesis focuses on the personal identity construction process for a small group of individuals, it holds implications for wider, political reimaginings of Zionism and Jewish identity.

For Stuart Hall (1994), identity is a production, something that is always in process and never complete. There is a common tendency to perceive identity as a shared culture based in common historical experiences and symbolic codes. This perception can lead individuals to view their identities as truths, which may then translate into political movements that embrace essentialist tendencies. While movements grounded in identity politics can offer a powerful force for liberation and for the representation of marginalized peoples, they can also prevent an acceptance of identities' fluid and diverse qualities. Accordingly, Hall emphasizes the importance of probing difference within our various group identifications. As he states:

We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about 'one experience, one

> identity.' Rather than a matter of being, identity is a matter of becoming. It is not found in a recovery of the past, instead, identity exists in how we currently position ourselves within the narratives of the past. (p. 225)

Hall's views on identity are echoed by others who affirm the fluidity of identity and the need to move away from static notions of ethnicity and culture. Like Hall, Rodriguez (2003) centers her approach to identity in difference, noting how the contradictions within identities serve to produce new subjectivities and knowledge. Drawing on Deleuze's (1983) "rhizomes," Rodriguez calls for the rejection of identity binaries in order to recognize the ways that identities are constantly breaking, diverging, and growing to create new formations. She encourages her readers to think of identity as more than just a list of categories by emphasizing how the borders of identities are always malleable.

Rodriquez also suggests that we should focus not just on what identity is, but more importantly, what identity is for. In thinking about Jewish national identity, my goal is not to reveal the contents of such identities but to interrogate their political consequences. What elements of Jewish national identity may obstruct the realization of a truly egalitarian society in Israel/Palestine, and which aspects may be reimagined and redirected to facilitate one?

While theorists such as Hall and Rodriguez focus on the larger epistemological debates surrounding identity, structural identity theory examines the link between social structures and identity by explaining how individuals use sets of meanings to define their relationships to certain roles or situations (Burke and Stets 2009). One of the main theories from this field, "Identity Control Theory" (ICD), defines identities as "sets of meanings people hold for themselves that define 'what it means' to be who they are as persons, as role occupants, and as group members" (Burke 2004: 5). In this way, identities provide a link between individuals' self-perceptions and societal expectations of them, which are largely

defined by culture. Within ICD, researchers have focused on the identity verification process, which occurs when people's self-perceptions align with societal roles and expectations of them. Such research has shown that individuals will strive to match their self-meanings to identity categories, and as a result, will seek out information and experiences that reinforce their identities, and avoid information and experiences that challenge them (Swann 1983).

Theoretically, this process would create a world of neat, separate categories that constantly protect themselves from disruption. However as scholars of queer theory and other critical approaches have shown, individuals often engage in resistance to societally imposed identities, and form their own unique, sometimes overtly political, understandings and presentations of their selves (Rupp and Taylor 2014). While structural identity theory primarily focuses on how categories are sustained, it also makes room for interpretation and malleability, though these changes are usually attributed to shifts in power and resources (Burke 2004). Therefore, while we may find evidence of identity categories' durability and resistance to change, it is also undeniable that identities are always in flux. Throughout history, one finds an endless supply of redefinitions, disappearances, and births of new identity categories, often stemming from intentional political projects. Even in the present, we may encounter people who are readily seeking information that challenges their senses of self and the meanings they hold, such as Jewish tourists to the OPT.

Drawing on the contributions of Black liberation movements in the United States, Singh (2005) suggests that identity-based histories of oppression and struggle can aid in the realization of more just universalities. Because marginalized populations build narratives and ideologies through the lived experience of stigma and exclusion, they are in a better position to articulate the qualities of a truly liberatory form of social organization. However, contrary

to the hopefulness that Singh sees for Black nationalism, Jewish nationalism has taken an opposite course; Jewish leaders often manipulate the memory of the Holocaust and other periods of persecution to facilitate the current oppression of Palestinians (Finkelstein 2000). To counter this trend, alternative tours in Israel/Palestine attempt to redirect such uses of Jewish collective consciousness, so that memories of the Holocaust and historical marginalization can motivate Jewish participants to work towards the liberation of others, especially Palestinians. With this project in mind, I turn now to the topic of diaspora in order to investigate the ways that Jewish diaspora has been used to obstruct the attainment of liberation for Palestinians, and to imagine how it may be rearticulated to facilitate it.

1.1.1 *Diaspora and Exile*

Diaspora is generally understood to refer to populations who "define themselves by reference to a distant homeland from which they once originated" (Barber 2001). Even though the term "diaspora" originally described Jews living outside of what is now the state of Israel, today it refers to any group that is scattered throughout the world from their historical homeland and still maintains a common bond of ethnicity, religion, culture, and/or national identity (Coles and Timothy 2004). Keeping with his emphasis on fluidity and difference, Hall (1994) rejects the centrality of collective, physical return in his conception of diaspora. As he states:

> Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. (p. 235)

Accordingly, scholars of diaspora identity such as Hall and Said (1998) instead focus on the ways that groups articulate their identities in terms of hybridity and transformation,

emphasizing the experience of diaspora, not the elimination of it. Said speaks personally of forced diaspora, or exile, when he states, “Israel/Palestine was no longer a place I could live in” (1998: ix) and “wherever we Palestinians are, we are not in our Palestine, which no longer exists” (1998: 11). For Said diaspora identity is formed in acknowledgement of the absence of a tangible, geographic location for return. Like Hall, Said finds the resolution of exile not in the total return to an earlier geographic and cultural location, but through the creation of a new space based on the eradication of exile for everyone. As he declares:

> The proof of whatever small success we have had is not that we have regained a homeland, or acquired a new one; rather, it is that some Israelis have admitted the possibility of sharing a common space with us, in Palestine. (p. 43)

Therefore, for Palestinians such as Said, as for many other populations in exile, diaspora is not a quest for control over a particular territory that serves as a protected, ethnically pure nucleus. Instead diaspora is rooted in struggle, opposition, and a longing that is expected to never fully materialize.

For Jewish diaspora identity however, that longing has materialized, thanks to the spoils of colonialism, European/white identity and racism, and the acquisition of significant military and financial resources. Hall (1994) refers explicitly to Zionism when he states:

> This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising, form of 'ethnicity'. We have seen the fate of the people of Palestine at the hands of this backward-looking conception of diaspora - and the complicity of the West with it. (p. 235)

Thus while Hall and others call for a move away from an essentialized notion of identity that focuses on return, current forms of Jewish national identity are often deeply rooted in stagnant conceptions of peoplehood and place. This approach to Jewish identity is seen through Israeli legislation like the “Law of Return,” which guarantees every Jewish person outside of Israel the right to Israeli citizenship. The Law of Return can be contrasted with

Israel's refusal to recognize the Palestinians' "Right of Return," whereby Israel denies Palestinian refugees who were expelled from the state in 1948 the right to return to their homes in present-day Israel. These policies, along with other corresponding measures to control the ethnic make-up of Israel, such as those concerning African asylum seekers, aggressively encourage Jewish immigration while limiting non-Jewish immigration and containing the size and power of the non-Jewish population in Israel. As a result, the state of Israel now exists as a material manifestation of remedying diaspora through mass, physical "return." Therefore, even if other scholars and members of diaspora groups reject the belief that diaspora identity can only be secured through returning at all costs to a sacred homeland, for many Jews, national identity is deeply rooted in such physical return, and for some extreme Jewish nationalists, this return must come at any cost.

Other Jews however reject this belief in physical return (Sand 2012, Butler 2012, Boyarin and Boyarin 2003), and it is that rejection of Zionism that is prioritized in this study. In *Theorizing Diaspora*, Boyarin and Boyarin (2003) offer a passionate appeal for the revival of diaspora, not Zionism, as the central, organizing tenet of Jewish identity. Rivaling even monotheism, they suggest that diaspora may be Judaism's greatest ideological contribution, as it teaches that there is no organic or natural connection between peoples and land. They trace an insistence on ethnic land rights to much of the world's violence, and accordingly argue that Jewish identity should move away from a focus on geography, and instead celebrate the generational connections among Jews.

Combining a fierce anti-assimilationist stance with an equally fervent opposition to nationalism, Boyarin and Boyarin (2003) contend that while the separatism that Jews practiced in the diaspora was highly moral and functioned to preserve Jewish beliefs and

traditions, its application in the context of Jewish hegemony is inappropriate and oppressive. This leads them to claim that the acquisition of land, as tied to Jewish racial or ethnic identity, is inherently flawed, and that all attempts to realize Jewish identity through territorial sovereignty must be relinquished to regain collective moral legitimacy. Instead of striving for a "proud resting place," they suggest that Jewish identity should be defined by a permanent state of dispersal, composed of "perpetual, creative, diasporic, tension" (2003: 103).

Yet despite the poignant analytical pleas of scholars such as Boyarin and Boyarin, Sand, and Butler to dissociate modern, Israel-centric Zionism from Jewish identity, the current contours of Zionism cannot be argued back into a previous form of so-called benevolent diaspora. In addition, even if in its earlier manifestations Zionism exhibited aspects of an oppositional identity, Jewish diaspora in the form of Zionism can no longer be categorized alongside truly exiled nations. Therefore, for those interested in challenging Zionism, it is insufficient to only analyze it through romanticized notions of Jewish history and biblical teachings. Instead, any critical analysis must also engage with Zionism in terms of the fully institutionalized, ethnic nationalism that is has become.

1.2 NATIONALISM

To conceptualize nationalism I employ Benedict Anderson's (1991) definition of the nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 6). Since I focus on the identities of Jews living outside of Israel, the notion of an "imagined community" is particularly useful as these individuals are largely removed territorially, culturally, and linguistically from the community that they consider to be

essential to their group identification.

Despite the rise of transnationalism alongside long-standing predictions of nationalism's declining appeal (Appadurai 1996; Hobsbawm 1990; Williams 2002), Anderson, among others (Sand 2012), confidently declares that nationalism is thriving. As he states:

> The reality is quite plain: the 'end of the era of nationalism,' so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time. (p. 3)

Anderson outlines three paradoxes that are prevalent in theories of nationalism. The first deals with historians' objectivist approach to modernity compared with the subjective appearance of nationalism to nationalists themselves. The second refers to the universal appeal of nationalism (Arendt 1966), in that everyone can and should have a nation contrasted with its highly varied concrete forms. Third, unlike other "isms," Anderson claims that nationalism lacks any grand thinkers or overarching philosophical foundation. While the number of scholars studying nationalism has certainly grown since Anderson's declaration, among sociologists, attention to nationalism and national identity still pales in comparison to attention devoted to categories such as gender and race.

Much of the scholarship that seeks to address these paradoxes can be divided into two distinct categories: the ethnicist and the modernist perspective. The ethnicist approach stems from the primordialist view, which sees nations as ancient and natural. In contrast, modernists understand nationalism as a fluid and malleable force that resulted from historical processes such as industrialization, print capitalism, mapmaking, compulsory education and military conscription (Anderson 1991; Gellner 1983; Giddens 1984; May 2008; Sand 2012). Modernists contend that before the rise of the modern nation-state, social life, identities and

loyalties were instead defined by local allegiances.

In contrast, the primordialist approach describes nationalism as an element of human nature found throughout history. Anthony Smith (1991) maintains that the primordial perspective is plagued by a perception of nations as organic and the result of either a natural or religious "master plan." Smith (1999), among others such as Brass (1991) and Grosby (1994), therefore dismisses the academic merit of primordialism, noting that although it accurately identifies the conditions and qualities of nationalism, it fails to describe its causes.

David McCrone (1998) argues that with the primordial perspective practically rejected within the academic community, today, the most relevant debate on nationalism exists between the modernists and the ethnicists. Like the primordialists, the ethnicists are convinced of nationalism's enduring, ethnic character. However in contrast to primordialism, ethnicists reject the notion that ethnicity is inherent to humankind. Instead, ethnicists or ethno-symbolists maintain that ethnicity, though socially constructed, is a significant part of nationalism, and that our understanding of nationalism is best informed by the study of collective memories, cultures, and traditions.

Considering Zionism's exceptional level of Jewish symbolism, and use of biblical and ancient history to justify it, this study approaches Zionism from a primarily ethnicist perspective. This focus does not represent a rejection of the modernist view, but a recognition of the central role that ethnicity plays in Jewish nationalism. This is also not to say that the modernist perspective has no relevance to Zionism, as contrastingly demonstrated by Kedourie (1960), Hobsbawm (1983), and Gellner (1983) who each discuss Zionism's parallel rise to fruition with other initially Europe-based nationalist movements. However, it cannot be denied that Jewish nationalism is infused with a distinct level of pre-modern, ethno-

religious symbols, and that its materialization cannot be reduced to the effects of modernization alone. In short, it is impossible to understand Zionism in isolation from Jewish ethno-religious identity and collective consciousness.

Other theorists, however, contend that Zionism cannot be fully explained by either approach. Israeli sociologist Yehouda Shenhav (2006) articulates this view:

> It is clear today that these models are not mutually exclusive and that the opposition between them has been largely exaggerated. Whereas the primordial model falls short of acknowledging the extent to which the past is engineered, the modernist model trivializes history, religion, and tradition and reduces nationalism to merely a political manipulation. (p. 3)

As an alternative, Shenhav employs Latour's (1993) model of modernity to explain Jewish nationalism in terms of "hybridization" and "purification." Shenhav argues that while Zionism presents its religious and secular-nationalist components as separate, modern Jewish nationalism actually represents a hybridization of the religious (primordial) and the secular–statist (modernist). Shenhav contends that Jewish nationalism is unique in this thorough blend of "Eastern religious-ethnicism" and "Western secularism and liberalism," explaining that while Zionism was the manipulated, modern creation of largely secular, European nationalists, it is still deeply rooted in a primordial religious/ethnic connection to the ancient land of Israel and Jewish tradition.

1.2.1 *Ethnic versus Civic Nationalism*

Another theoretical model that helps to illuminate the contradictory currents in Jewish nationalism, or Zionism, is the ethnic versus civic nationalism paradigm. The ethnic-civic dichotomy has been applied to a diverse array of countries, peoples, and regions, including the Armenians, Kurds, the United States, Australia, Britain, Indonesia, France, Germany,

Russia, Malaysia, Turkey, Quebec, Islamic nationalism, Black nationalism, as well as many others (Augoustinos and Every 2008; Brubaker 1992; Condor 2006; Every and Greenfeld 1992; Khazanov 1997; Kreuzer; Milley 2007; Smith 1999; Straughn 2008; Wood 2007). Ethnic nationalism is typically characterized by a strong connection to land and an emphasis on ancestry, religion, and cultural traditions (McCrone 1998). In contrast, civic nationalism is theoretically defined by political allegiances that are territorially rather than ethnically sustained (McCrone 1998). Civic nationalism is also usually rooted in democratic ideals, and in appearance, strives for equality among its citizens (Ignatieff 1993). Accordingly, civic nationalism is thought to promote tolerance and liberal values, while ethnic nationalism is typically characterized by exclusionary and even racist values (Kaufmann and Zimmer 2004).

Theorists such as Schnapper (1998) have utilized the ethnic-civic dichotomy model to argue for the importance of separating civic structures from ethnic allegiances. She attempts to dissociate nation from ethnicity in order to give a "civic" framework to the state's democratic practices. She argues that citizenship, as the active participation of individuals in political life, cannot exist without a community that integrates citizens into a whole. She proposes that this community be constructed through civic education, which must constantly redraw and reinforce the boundary between nationalism and patriotism. For Schnapper, national belonging does not contradict the universal, but is actually necessary for its realization.

Balibar (2004) takes issue with Schnapper's recommendation for "non-discriminatory discrimination," arguing that nationalism is deeply tied to a process of othering and political exclusion. Critiquing universalism's racist manifestations, which serve as the foundation of

civic nationalism, Balibar and Singh (2005) explain how these supposedly neutral structures of inclusion are actually filled with exclusionary content. Balibar highlights universalism's roots in the national bourgeois revolutions and the ways that colonialism was justified through supposedly "universalist" ideals. Singh makes a similar argument, demonstrating how the United States is often upheld as one of the purer, more egalitarian forms of civic nationalism, when in actuality, white supremacy is deeply integrated into American "civic" nationalism to sustain a system of racial domination. Rather than see civic nationalism as an "empty abstraction," Singh argues that, like all forms of nationalism, civic nationalism is the product of specific cultural narratives, customs, and histories.

Other scholars are similarly critical of the supposed distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism. As McCrone (1998) suggests, the civic/ethnic distinction "does lend itself to an ethnocentric caricature – why can't *they* be more like *us?*" (p. 9). McCrone goes on to assert that racism and war are no less frequent in "civic" societies than "ethnic" ones, a claim that is supported by several case studies, such as Kreuzer (2006), who argues that the ethnic nationalism that arose in Malaysia turned out to be more tolerant and inclusive than the civic nationalism that exists in Indonesia. Similarly, Herzfeld (1992) maintains that so-called civic societies maintain an equal level of symbolic meaning and are no more rational than "ethnic/traditional" societies. May (2008) builds on this notion, suggesting that civic or modern societies only appear "un-ethnic" because the symbolic bases of civic societies have been labeled as civic values and traditions. As May explains, "In effect, the ethnic interests of the majority group are legitimated and naturalized as civic ones which, in turn, are equated directly with modernity" (p. 53).

There is no doubt that these scholars are correct in identifying the often more violent

and racist nature of "civic" societies, as well as the significant level of symbolism and religion in civic nationalism. However, other theorists maintain that ethnically-based and civically-based nationalisms are nonetheless rooted in two separate ideologies that facilitate distinct levels of intranational exclusion. As Smith (1999) explains, ethnic nationalism is specifically related to a common ancestry that one cannot genuinely escape or adopt, a restriction that Said (1998) reflects upon in regards to Palestinians' relationship to Israeli nationalism:

> Palestine has been replaced by an Israel whose aggressive sense of itself as the state of the Jewish people fuels the exclusivity of a national identity won and maintained to a great extent at our expense. We are not Jews, we have no place there except as resident aliens, we are outsiders. (p. 34)

This exclusionary basis of national belonging is distinct from civic nationalism, where the nation, if at least superficially, is sustained by ideological premises that are open to individuals of varied ancestries. Michael Ignatieff (1993) summarizes, "Ethnic nationalism claims, by contrast, that an individual's deepest attachments are inherited, not chosen. It is the national community that defines the individual, not the individuals who define the national community" (pp. 7-8).

Jewish/Israeli nationalism's unique combination of both overt ethnic political dominance and a superficial commitment to civic ideals makes a compelling case for the application of the civic-ethnic paradigm, if only to explore its limits. While I have no interest in defending so-called civic nations like the United States as more responsive to the lives of ethnic minorities, I maintain that the ethnic-civic distinction is nonetheless helpful in identifying some of the particularly destructive manifestations of Jewish/Israeli national identity. By understanding the ethnic-civic distinction not as a marker of Western superiority to be used for international comparison, but as an analytical device to name and evaluate

certain nationalist currents *within* Israeli society, we can appreciate it as a clarifying mechanism to illuminate the particularly obdurate elements of Jewish national identity that continue to stifle Palestinian liberation.

Unlike other forms of civic nationalism whereby the state's citizens determine the nature of the state, Jewish nationalism openly deviates from this approach as it is outwardly and extra-territorially defined to perpetuate the growth and power (within Israel) of an ethnic/religious group. Though uncommon, this type of bloodline nationalism is not unique to Israel; it is found in other countries, for example, Korea (Shin 2006). Though it openly defines itself as a state of and for the Jewish people, Israel simultaneously expresses a rhetorical commitment to traditionally civic ideals, as seen in its official (though minimally implemented) adoption of both Hebrew and Arabic as national languages, as well as its democratic electoral system (though democratic rights are precarious for citizens who do not endorse the idea of Israel as the state of the Jews). In terms of political representation, Israeli democracy vis-à-vis its non-Jewish citizens could be compared to American democracy for Black citizens during the Jim Crow era. In the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinians are stateless subjects of Israeli occupation, and are subjected to an entirely separate and unrepresentative legal system. However, Jewish Israeli settlers who live in the West Bank carry with them their civic rights as citizens.

Rather than define Zionism as purely ethnic or civic, Uri Ram (2000) and Ilan Pappe (2000) conclude that both forms of nationalism exist within Israeli society, but that they are each particular to separate segments of the population. Ram and Pappe maintain that the traditional Zionist account is plagued by an unsolvable contradiction of ethnic and civic values, and thus is destined to morph into either exclusionist, ethnic neo-Zionism or civic,

democratic post-Zionism. The neo-Zionist solution favors the preservation of Israel's ethno-religious Jewish character in place of its democratic practices. In contrast, post-Zionism supports Israel's relinquishing of its commitment to a "Jewish state" in favor of a civic democracy (Ram 2000).

1.2.2 *Jewish Nationalism in the Diaspora*

Because non-Israeli Jews were not born in Israel and do not (yet) possess Israeli citizenship, any purely civic understanding of Jewish nationalism by definition excludes them. As a result, non-Israeli Jews' ability to identify with Jewish nationalism is theoretically limited to a neo-Zionist or ethnic nationalist emphasis on religious and cultural symbols, rather than a post-Zionist focus on citizenship and territoriality. Despite this, a growing number of non-Israeli Jews are beginning to identify with post- and anti-Zionist strands of thought (Alexander and Bogdanor 2006). Among Jews under 30 especially, scholars have noted a recent shift in Jews' relationship to Israel and Zionism. As Sasson (2010) suggests, diaspora Jews are developing increasingly complicated relationships to the Israeli state compared to earlier generations of Jews who espoused unequivocal support for Israel. The 2013 PEW study on Jewish Americans provides further evidence for such a generational shift, as young Jews appear to be diverging from dominant perspectives on Israel that privilege Israeli security concerns over Palestinians' rights. For example, the majority of respondents over 65 reported that caring about Israel is an essential part of their Jewish identity, while only one-third of respondents under 30 made the same claim. In addition, while 45 percent of respondents over 65 felt that the Israeli government was making a sincere effort to reach a peace agreement, only 26 percent of respondents under 30 agreed.

Sasson (2010) argues that this more critical stance of young North American Jews towards Zionism is not indicative of their alienation from Israel. Instead, he maintains that this rising criticism represents American Jews' heightened sense of concern for it, in that Jews now care enough about Israel to try to influence it through direct engagement. A number of scholars of Jewish identity have fiercely debated Sasson's conclusion, claiming instead that young Jews are becoming more detached from Israel and their Jewish identity (Kotler-Berkowitz & Ament 2010). Despite these contrasting interpretations, it is clear that this younger generation of Jews is more willing to criticize and openly contest Israeli policies and Zionism than their parents' and grandparents' generations. This change opens up space for a variety of political movements to recruit Jewish activists in order to strengthen their efforts to secure Palestinian rights and an end to the Israeli occupation. Alternative tours to Israel/Palestine are one of the many ways that such movements are attempting to change the conversation on Israel/Palestine in Jewish communities and garner greater support for a just peace in the region.

1.3 TOURISM

Tourism offers a particularly revealing lens to examine the changing relationship between transnational identities and the nation-state. As the world becomes more globalized and migration increases, understanding transnational identities, territoriality, and diaspora is crucial to conceptualizing avenues for global social change. Tourism is also an intellectually powerful framework to investigate diaspora identities because it prioritizes the significance of constructed meaning through the consumption of space (Kelner 2010). It therefore offers an important site to examine the intersection of territorially defined nations and symbolically

constructed notions of belonging and peoplehood.

Beyond tourism's theoretical relevance to understanding transnational identities, it represents a major economic and socio-political development. Tourism constitutes the largest international movement of people of all time, and it causes extreme cultural shifts, as developing countries are compelled to restructure their economies in order to maximize their profitability as tourist destinations (Eadington & Smith 1992; Kelner 2010; Urry 2011). With these major global ramifications in mind, tourism should not be studied as a peripheral element of social life or seen merely as a form of leisurely consumption. Instead, sociologists should prioritize tourism in their research as one of the fastest growing and most globally transformative processes of social life today.

1.3.1 *Authenticity and Performance*

Tourism acts as a double-edged sword in that it can enable cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, and yet, it can also be destructive and oppressive for local communities (Kincaid 1988). As the largest industry in the world (Urry 2011), it provides a rapidly expanding terrain to study the causes and conditions of global disparities. Early sociological studies of tourism focused primarily on representations of authenticity (as a contrast to modernity) sought by Western tourists (MacCannel1 1999, Pearce and Moscardo 1996). In this strand of thought, tourism is conceptualized as a form of escape and discovery that allows privileged individuals to consume "authentic" (i.e. non-modernized) forms of life and culture.

Numerous scholars have theorized the meaning of authenticity, offering various categorizations, such as "objective (object)" authenticity (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006),

"constructed" authenticity (E. Cohen, 1988; Olsen, 2002; Cook, 2010) and "subjective (existential)" authenticity (Cary, 2004; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Cook 2010). More recently, theorists have shifted towards conceptualizing authenticity as a process rather than a descriptive category (Cohen and Cohen 2012). In addition, with the rise of post-modernist thought, many scholars have dismissed the theoretical relevancy of authenticity all together (Cohen and Cohen 2012).

One of the most significant recent contributions to the sociology of tourism is Urry's *Tourist Gaze* (2001). Urry employs Foucault's (1973) notion of the "medical gaze" to describe the experiences of people working in the tourism industry and how their performing for the tourist gaze commodifies cultures and ultimately changes ethnic identities and customs. This approach to tourism represents an important shift away from a focus on the reasons why people travel to how tourism is shaped by power, and its oppressive effects on local populations. In his discussion of the tourist gaze, Urry explains that in order to maximize their financial gain, locals alter their behavior and presentations of themselves to reflect back tourists' expectations of them. Urry's analysis opens up space for critical discussions of tourism's effects on local populations and its dependency on capitalist exploitation, while also making room for critiques of racialized and gendered power in tourist activities.

1.3.2 *Alternative Tourism*

While most forms of tourism operate with traditional business models, "alternative tourism" challenges a purely profit-based approach. Alternative tourism remains a vague concept, with multiple definitions of what actually constitutes it (Butler 1992 and Pearce

1992). Eadington and Smith (1992) define it as tourism that is "consistent with natural, social and community values and which allow[s] both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interactions and shared experiences" (p. 3). While multiple definitions exist, what unites all types of alternative tourism, whether environmental, ethnic, or religious, is that they have social or political aims, beyond simply making a profit.

Many alternative tours are organized by marginalized groups and social justice advocates who use tourism as a tool to raise awareness and encourage political activism. This type of tourism, often referred to as "justice tourism," involves "a process which promotes a just form of travel between members of different communities. It seeks to achieve mutual understanding, solidarity and equality amongst participants" (Pearce 1992: 18). Justice tourism spans a wide range of regions and topics, such as environmental justice tours in Los Angeles, Occupy Wall Street's educational tours of New York City, and organized trips to Chiapas in Mexico to learn about the Zapatistas. These types of programs aim to raise participants' political consciousness, maintaining that increased political awareness and knowledge is necessary for effective political activism.

In Palestine, justice tourism evolved as a response to the exclusion of Palestinians' cultural and political realties from mainstream and for-profit "Holy Land" tours (Isaac 2009). While the alternative tourism movement is most closely aligned with Palestinian initiatives, Palestinian tours are not the only ones with political motives. As Cohen-Hattab (2004) notes, starting before the establishment of the Israeli state, both Jews and Palestinians have been consistently using tourism to promote their national agendas and battle for the "hearts and minds" of foreign visitors.

In his discussion of external bystanders to atrocities, Cohen (2001) charges both

Israelis and Palestinians with promoting observer denial among tourists to support their own political narratives. On the Palestinian side, Cohen criticizes travelers to the OPT for only seeking information that reinforces their previous political positions. He claims that many of these tourists refuse to even visit Israeli communities and are completely blind to Israeli political culture. He goes on to accuse Palestinian activists and their sympathizers of being afraid to air their dirty laundry for fear that it might weaken their political cause.

On the Israeli side, Cohen lambasts Jewish-American tourists who are critical of human rights abuses in other parts of the world, but justify the suffering of Palestinians by adhering to a problematic narrative of Jewish victimhood. Cohen explains how Israeli guides play on stereotypes of American Jews as weak and passive, by allowing them to identify with the "tough Jew" persona of the Israeli soldier or settler (Breines 1990). In addition, guides exaggerate Israel's "accomplishments" on gay and women's rights to distract tourists from Israel's treatment of Palestinians. Butler explains how this tactic, also known as "pink-washing," uses progressive causes such as sexual freedom to justify repressive immigration policies and wars on predominately Muslim populations (2009). Together these strategies promote what Cohen calls "cultural denial" (2001). Tourists begin to understand Israel through a specific cultural framework that makes it difficult for them to reconcile Israel's actions with the country's supposed moral status. This allows tourists to deny Israeli acts of violence and oppression, since they judge the validity of such acts through a carefully constructed lens of Israel's ethical superiority. Alternative political tours, such as Walls2Windows, seek to undo some of this strategic representation by confronting tourists with sites and voices that vigorously contradict the narrative of Israel's moral superiority.

Another concept that can overlap with "justice tourism" is "thana-tourism" or "dark

tourism" (Stone and Sharpley 2008). Thana-tourism involves travel to places that are associated with suffering or death, such as graveyards (Seaton 2002), Holocaust memorials (Beech 2000), or slavery-heritage tours (Dann and Seaton 2001). Dann (1998) identifies several motives for participation in dark tourism, including fear of ghosts, search for novelty, nostalgia, celebration of deviance, and seeking feelings of a heightened sense of humanity. While definitely not all justice tourism is necessarily thana-tourism, in the case of Israel/Palestine, political tourism to the OPT often focuses on sites of tragedy and instances of violence and suffering to mobilize political support through empathy with the Palestinian plight.

1.3.3 *Diaspora and Tourism*

This study focuses on a unique form of tourism that combines justice tourism with another type of alternative tourism known as diaspora or homeland tourism. While in most tourism, the objects of the tourist gaze represent "the other" for tour participants (Morinis 1992), in homeland or diaspora tourism, objects of the tourist gaze operate instead as signifiers of the self (Kelner 2010). In this way, diaspora tourism serves as a mechanism for tourists to gain greater insight into their own identities and culture, rather than as an opportunity to look upon foreign populations to experience difference.

Returning to Cohen's (2001) discussion of tourism in Israel and Palestine, the focus of this study is on neither traditional Palestinian solidarity tourism nor mainstream Jewish Zionist tourism. Instead, I look at an emerging type of tourism that provides ordinary Jewish tourists to Israel with the opportunity to travel to the OPT for a tour that more closely aligns with a Palestinian solidarity tour. In this way, these tours place participants, who were

previously shielded from Israel's treatment of Palestinians, in the position of a bystander, where they are confronted with evidence of Israel's aggression that contradicts their previously held beliefs. Alternative Jewish tours therefore combine both justice tourism and diaspora tourism, in that they engage with the specific allegiances and nationalist sentiments of Jewish tourists in order to promote political reflection and a greater concern for justice in the region.

For many diaspora populations, tourism is largely associated with familial and business commitments. Members of diaspora groups travel to their home countries to visit family or to utilize their language and cultural knowledge for economic purposes (Coles and Timothy 2004). Other forms of diaspora tourism however are more organized and involve strategic political interests on the part of the home country and diaspora institutions. Kelner (2010) explains that diaspora institutions increasingly recognize the power of tourism as an effective medium to construct transnational community through political socialization. In addition to Jewish tourism to Israel, other countries such as China, Ireland, Scotland, India, and Pakistan are employing tourist initiatives to strengthen ties with their diaspora communities. For example, Bruner (1996) explains how many African-Americans travel to Ghana to discover their roots and visit sites that represent the struggles of their ancestors during slavery.

Jewish tourism to Israel is a compelling example of political "homeland" or diaspora tourism because such tours often operate with the explicit goal to solidify Jewish ethno-national identities and to elicit political and financial support. As Chazan and Saxe (2008) note, tourism has become a primary tool in Jewish education to address the perceived threat of assimilation. While there is ample research on Jewish travel to Israel, dating back to the

1960s, most of this research has taken a marketing approach and failed to seriously engage with broader academic discussions of ethnic and nationalist tourism (Kelner 2010). For this reason, further sociological research is necessary to investigate the processes of identity construction and political socialization that underlie Jewish tourism to Israel.

A large number of such studies on Jewish tourism to Israel focus on Birthright, a free 10-day tour for Jewish young adults that promotes Jewish peoplehood and a connection to the state of Israel (Chazan and Saxe 2008). To date, over 400,000 people, primarily from North America, have traveled to Israel as a part of the Birthright program. Anyone with immediate Jewish lineage between the ages of 18 and 26 is eligible to go on a Birthright trip, provided they have not lived in Israel during their adult lives or participated in a Jewish peer program in Israel. Over the course of ten days, participants are bused to all of the major Israeli cities and historical sites, where they engage in bonding exercises that serve to strengthen their connection to each other, to Israelis, and to the Jewish people. For example, according to one interviewee, after spending the day at Yad VaShem, the Israeli Holocaust museum, his Birthright group immediately traveled to a graveyard for Israeli soldiers to sit in a circle and discuss the need for a Jewish state and ethnic solidarity.

Researchers report that Birthright participants have a stronger Jewish identity, relationship to Israel, and connection to the Jewish people than Jews of the same demographic who have never been on a Birthright program (Saxe 2004, Saxe 2012, Kelner 2010). A 2004 longitudinal study on Birthright participants' attitudes shows that these sentiments persist over several years. While Birthright's official aim is to strengthen Jewish identity and fight assimilation, studies demonstrate that the most salient impact of the Birthright program relates to participants' relationship to Israel. In their study of Birthright

participants, Saxe et. al (2004) found that nine out of ten participants professed a desire to return to Israel in the next two years. In addition, Birthright participants reported that they felt a stronger connection to Israel than non-Birthright participants, and that they felt more capable of explaining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These findings suggest that while Birthright may claim to focus on religious and cultural aspects of Judaism, it largely functions to solidify nationalistic diaspora ties and support for the Israeli state among diaspora Jews.

While such studies point towards Birthright's strong influence on participants' identities, one could easily suspect that those with a preexisting connection to Israel and Judaism would be more likely to attend a Birthright trip than other Jews. As result, it is methodologically problematic to attribute the higher levels of attachment to Israel and confidence in explaining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict solely to participation in a Birthright trip. My research addresses this issue of sampling bias by analyzing the attitudes of the same participants before and after their tour, rather than comparing them to respondents who have never been on a tour. In this way I can make a stronger case for causality in the quantitative aspects of my research than previous studies of Jewish tourism to Israel.

In addition, my research employs qualitative methods such as those found in Shaul Kelner's book, *Tours that Bind*. Kelner's ethnographic data detail the profound emotional experiences and ideological shifts that Birthright participants report. He quotes a number of participants who claim that the trip changed their lives and allowed them to "find themselves." For example: "I know it sounds cliché, but the truth is that this trip changed my life…I now realize that the foundation of Israel is the foundation of the Jewish people." Or, "Being in Israel has truly changed my life. It has changed the way I see myself and the

context in which I fit into every aspect of my life…I have never been more proud to be part of something in my life." And also, "It was simply incredible – the best thing I've done in my entire life and I will be eternally grateful. It gave me a passion and a meaning to live and has literally changed my life." (Kelner 2010: 187). The intensity of these quotes demonstrates that Birthright is profoundly successful in affecting the emotions and shaping the identities of some of its participants, further exemplifying the power of diaspora tourism.

While it is clear that some participants respond to Birthright with intense shifts in their identities and political views, Taylor, Levi, and Dinovitzer (2012) demonstrate that these reactions are often rooted in heightened states of ambivalence, rather than pure, primordialist understandings of identity. By evoking participants' emotions and ideological uncertainties, Birthright instills a complicated sense of collective identity that goes beyond a romanticized relationship to Israel. As they explain, "collective identity is forged in these trips precisely because they engage and mobilize competing sets of emotions from participants, who experience dimensions of closeness and distance at once" (p. 69). Taylor Levi, and Dinovitzer reveal the complex ways that programs like Birthright influence Jewish-Americans' identity construction and senses of national belonging. They explain that it is sometimes Birthright participants' troubled feelings of distance and rejection from Israel that actually cause them to affirm their commitments to "work for" the Jewish state.

In the last decade, more Jews have been participating in "alternative Jewish tourism," which challenges Birthright's agenda by deliberately engaging with the Palestinian national narrative (Aviv 2011). Thus far, Aviv's 2011 article, "The Emergence of Alternative Jewish Tourism," is the only research that has been conducted on these tours. While Stein's (2008) *Itineraries in Conflict* also examines the relationship between Jewish travel to Palestinian

spaces and national identity, her work focuses on leisure and consumption-based tourism. In contrast to this form of pleasure-based travel, alternative Jewish tourism actively pursues emotional discomfort and unpleasant experiences that are meant to provoke deeper processes of political reflection.

These alternative tours represent an extreme departure from traditional Jewish tourism to Israel in that they explicitly seek to complicate rather than validate participants' diaspora national ties. While Birthright tours may unintentionally complicate participants' Zionist identities, alternative tours are explicitly designed to challenge them. According to Aviv, such tours prompt difficult conversations about power, challenge traditional national-historical narratives, and promote dialogue and reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians through people-to-people interactions. She describes how the content of these tours destabilizes myths, challenges the foundation of Jewish nationalist assumptions, and engages with repressed information and perspectives (Aviv 2011).

While Aviv's analysis is helpful in terms of identifying the ideological content and strategic approach of these tours, her research does not measure the tours' impact on participants. Aviv identifies the tours' goals, but she stops short of demonstrating whether or not they are effective in achieving them. While the emergence of such alternative tourism is fascinating in itself, it is important to understand how participants respond to this purportedly ideologically disruptive experience.

By asking how these tours influence participants' identities and political allegiances, my research is the first systematic study of the effects of these political tours, filling a gap in the literature on Jewish tourism to Israel. Specifically, I investigate how these tours impact participants' national identities and political views. Do the tours complicate participants'

Zionism and cause them to adopt more critical attitudes towards the base state (Israel)? If so, how do participants reconcile this criticism with their diaspora nationalism? I also evaluate how tourists' newfound political dissent and nationalism shapes their activism on Israel/Palestine. These questions allow me to contribute to the broader topic of tourism's role in generating criticism of exclusionary national narratives among diaspora populations. In addition, they shed light on larger questions of the relationship between national identity and political dissent, specifically, the supposed link between one's level of identification with the base state and their willingness to criticize it.

2. METHODS

To determine the effects of these alternative tours, I combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a thorough investigation of tour participants' identities and reactions to the tour experience. I base my analysis on two data sources: 105 before and after tour surveys that include both quantitative and qualitative data, and 15 in-depth interviews with former tour participants.

I focus on a case study of a tour program called Walls2Windows, which I founded while living in Israel and the OPT. Walls2Windows brings primarily North American Jews to the West Bank in order to expose them to the Israeli military occupation and to provide a platform for Palestinian voices to reach Jewish-Americans. Every day I would watch form my office in Tel Aviv as tour group after tour group of young American Jews would travel throughout Israel on Birthright without ever meeting a single Palestinian or stepping foot in the OPT. It frustrated me that these otherwise open-minded and critical young students were only hearing one side of the story. I believed that if Birthright participants had the opportunity to talk to Palestinians and to see the occupation for themselves, they would be more likely to question Birthright's version of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Participants for the Walls2Windows tour are recruited within Israel primarily through contact with Jewish organizations such as Birthright, MASA, and study abroad programs at Israeli universities. The goal is to offer these Jewish tourists an opportunity to experientially engage with the Palestinian perspective by providing evidence of the logical and ethical flaws in traditional Zionist narratives through first-hand observation. By exposing participants to the harsh reality of life in the OPT, the tours seek to complicate participants' perspectives on Israel through hearing from Palestinians who can attest to the human rights

violations that they experience living under occupation. The program has brought hundreds of young people to the West Bank, and is still in operation as of March 2015.

The tour begins with an overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where the guide uses maps and other visual aids to educate participants on the history of Zionism, the Nakba, and the various surges in violence between Israel and its adversaries. This introduction brings participants to the present day, where they are faced with the failure of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, and continued dispossession and occupation of Palestinian land. Depending on the tour guide, the tour follows one of two itineraries.

The first itinerary begins in East Jerusalem where participants are acquainted with Palestinian Jerusalemites' precarious residency status and the lack of services and rights afforded to them despite living under total Israeli sovereignty. The tour participants walk from West Jerusalem to East Jerusalem in order to see the changing socio-economic conditions, as well as cultural changes such as dress and language. Once in East Jerusalem, participants catch a local Palestinian bus to Bethlehem, where they sit alongside Palestinian riders as they drive by a massive settlement. Participants are then dropped off in front of the main Bethlehem-Jerusalem checkpoint where they must show their passports to armed Israeli soldiers amidst barbed wire and metal detectors.

Once through the checkpoint, participants witness the separation wall and then take a taxi to the main public square in Bethlehem. Next participants meet their Palestinian guides and join them for lunch at a local Falafel restaurant. After lunch, participants travel to one of the Bethlehem refugee camps, where a resident tells them about life in the camp. At this point participants are exposed to the severe poverty at the camp and historical/political visuals such as the original UN buildings as well as the fences and turnstiles used by the

Israeli army during the intifada. After the refugee camp, participants return to the separation wall to see the graffiti and hear about how the wall has impacted Palestinian life. Finally, participants travel back through the checkpoint and the tour ends in Jerusalem with a closing session that is sometimes joined by an Israeli anti-occupation activist.

The second itinerary, which the majority of respondents from this study participated in, begins at the Central Bus Station in West Jerusalem where participants ride on a public Israeli bus to Hebron that is full of soldiers and settlers. The bus drops off participants inside of an Israeli settlement called Kiryat Arba. The group then travels by foot from the settlement alongside a road that leads to a Palestinian neighborhood. Though populated by Palestinians, this neighborhood is under full Israeli control, allowing participants to see how Palestinians are unable to drive along the road in front of their homes and are generally harassed by neighboring settlers. Next participants visit the old city of Hebron, where they reach a pedestrian walkway that is monitored by soldiers and divided by a barricade that separates the road into two, one side for Israelis, one for Palestinians. Participants then continue along Shuhada Street after having their passports checked by an Israeli soldier. Along Shuhada Street, participants witness the "ghost-town" like atmosphere, as Palestinian access to the street is denied, Palestinian businesses have been shut down, and many Palestinian homes have been evicted. After crossing through another checkpoint, participants walk through the Palestinian section of Hebron (H1) to see the contrast with the Israeli controlled area (H2), as well as to buy souvenirs and observe daily life. While in the market, participants walk underneath netting that catches trash and other objects thrown at Palestinians by settlers who live above their shops. Soldiers maintain an intimidating presence throughout the tour, as they are constantly visible from guard towers and various checkpoints.

Participants then have lunch with a Palestinian family from Hebron, where they meet Mahmoud, a young Palestinian who studied abroad in the United States. After lunch, participants travel by bus to Bethlehem where they visit Aida refugee camp. Aida camp is located next to the separation wall between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Participants have the opportunity to approach the wall and photograph its impressive graffiti. In addition, participants meet another Palestinian family and learn about life in the refugee camp. The tour concludes with a closing session and a final journey through the Jerusalem-Bethlehem checkpoint, where participants are asked to show their IDs to armed soldiers.

While working at Windows, my co-workers and I developed surveys in order to evaluate the success of our program. These surveys were distributed to tour participants immediately before and after the tour, and were offered to participants as opportunity for them to provide feedback to the tour organizers. The survey begins with four questions that ask participants how strongly they agree or disagree with each statement on a scale of one to five. The statements are:

- It is important for those traveling to Israel to see Palestine
- I expect that what I will learn today will change my opinion about Israel/Palestine
- I have an informed and critical opinion about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict
- It is dangerous to travel to the West Bank

Participants are then asked:

- Is this your first time in Israel/Palestine?
- Have you ever participated in a Jewish heritage trip?
- Did you plan to visit the West Bank before arriving in Israel?
- What is the context of your current trip?
- Are you here with a particular organization?
- What three words come to mind when you think of Palestine?

The exit survey repeats the first four questions and asks:

- Which parts of the tour were the most influential and why?
- Did the tour change your perception of the conflict?
- What parts of the tour were surprising and meaningful?
- Did the things you saw and heard on the tour today conflict with things you previously thought about the conflict?

Participants are also asked about their desire to engage further with Israel/Palestine, through three "yes" or "no" questions, which read:

"Today's tour caused me to want to:"

- Be an active member of the initiative for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- Seek more information
- Return to the West Bank

Analysis for this study focused on the questions of whether it is dangerous to travel to the West Bank, how important it is for those traveling to Israel to see Palestine, which part of the tour was most influential, and the final three questions on activism. For the first two questions, participants' individual answers were recorded to determine a before and after effect. The average scores were calculated, as well as the average difference in scores between the pre-tour and post-tour surveys. For the question of which part of the tour was most influential, tour locations were ranked by those that received the highest number of participants who chose it as the most influential, to the place with the fewest number of participants who chose it. The three questions on activism were compared based upon the percentage of participants who marked yes for that particular outcome.

In addition to this survey data of 105 respondents who attended the Walls2Windows tour, I conducted 15 in-depth interviews with former tour participants to more thoroughly address questions of meaning, identity, and biography. Potential participants were selected from the 105 survey respondents, using retroactive purposive/judgmental sampling

techniques (Berg and Lune 2012). Based upon respondents' answers to survey questions, I selected for interviewees who are Jewish, were short-term tourists to Israel, and appeared to hold mainstream Zionist views on the conflict before attending the tour. Sampling for this demographic in my interviews allows me to better speak to issues of causality, in terms of attributing changes in participants' opinions to the tours, and in order to compare my results with existing research on the effects of mainstream Jewish tours to Israel/Palestine.

One of the drawbacks to this method is that participants may have approached the interviews with preconceived notions of the interviewer's opinions. Since the interviewees knew that the interviewer was affiliated with the tour program and left-wing politics, interviewees may have tried to mirror the interviewer's opinions or conceal their own views to maintain an amiable conversation. Alternatively participants may have been more aggressive or argumentative if they felt the need to convince the interviewer of their opinions. Either way, conversations on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often involve an element of judgment and subsequent adjustment of how one presents his or her positions. Knowing ahead of time how the interviewees are likely to view the interviewer, and incorporating that knowledge into the analysis is arguably more effective than trying to maintain neutrality on such a divisive topic.

Another issue with the participants knowing that the interviewer is affiliated with the tour program is that they may have been superficially positive in their reactions to the tour, so as not to offend the interviewer by criticizing her work. In fact, there was a tendency among interviewees to be overly complimentary of the tour. However, such statements were generally insubstantial in content, with participants stating that they enjoyed the tour or that they thought it was well done. Such statements were not coded for analysis, as they did not

relate to changes in political views or identities. In addition, only about half the tours were led by the researcher, and there was no discernable difference in feedback between interviewees who attended the tours led by the researcher and those who attended the tours led by a different guide.

Similarly, the tour surveys used for this study were not distributed by a neutral third party, but were completed by participants knowing that they were providing feedback for the tour organizers. Again, the issue of inaccurate positive responses, or telling the organizers "what they wanted to hear," is a concern, though not a major one, as most of these statements were not used for analysis since they did not contain information about participants' identities and political views. In addition, despite the drawbacks of this method, using surveys and interviewees from the interviewer's own work allowed for a valuable level of control, access, and detailed knowledge of the tour programs, that may have been unattainable if the interviewer were to try to study participants on an external tour program. Working from within provided an exceptional degree of access to the tour participants, the time and freedom to determine the nature of her interaction with the research subjects, as well as detailed knowledge of the tour's goals, content, and inner-workings.

Participants were recruited through email with a personalized invitation to participate in an interview. Invitations were sent to former tour participants who indicated that they would like to be contacted in the future. The sample of interviewees for this study consisted of six men and nine women. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 30, and all participants lived in the United States for most of their lives, except for one participant from Argentina. Three participants held Israeli citizenship, although one obtained it after the Walls2Windows tour. The majority of participants identified as Ashkenazi (white) Jews, with two participants

of mixed Ashkenazi-Mizrahi (Jewish-Arab) identity, and one Sephardic. All participants were currently enrolled in or had completed higher education. Demographic data was collected through a written, open-ended survey.

Table 1. Demographic Information on Interviewees

Name	**Age**	**Gender**	**Region**	**Highest Degree Obtained**	**Religion**[2]	**Race**	**Israeli Citizen**	**Ethnicity**
Anna	28	Female	East Coast	MA	Conservative	White	No	Ashkenazi
Mark	25	Male	East Coast	BA	Mixed: Reform Judaism and Protestant Christianity	Caucasian	No	---
Fernando	25	Male	Argentina	BA	Liberal Jew	Caucasian	No	Ashkenazi /Sephardic
Caroline	26	Female	East Coast	BA	Just Jewish	White	No	Ashkenazi
Lisa	26	Female	East Coast	BA	Reform	White	No	Ashkenazi
Rachel	30	Female	East Coast	JD	Reform	White	No	Ashkenazi
Eddie	26	Male	East Coast	BA	Secular/ Atheist	White/ Middle Eastern	Yes	Ashkenazi /Mizrahi
Jamie	24	Female	West Coast	MA	Reform	White	No	Ashkenazi
Benji	30	Male	Midwest/ East Coast	DSc	Jewish	White[3]	After Tour	Ashkenazi
Bryce	23	Male	West Coast	BA	Reform	White	No	Ashkenazi
Louis	26	Male	Midwest	BA	Reform	White	No	Sephardic
Maggie	26	Female	South	MA	Reform	White	No	Ashkenazi
Sasha	22	Female	East Coast	BA	Conservative	Caucasian	No	Ashkenazi
Emma	25	Female	East Coast	MA	Not religious	Caucasian	No	Ashkenazi
Daisy	24	Female	South	MS	Secular	Jewish	Yes	Ashkenazi /Mizrahi

* Responses were obtained from an open-ended survey that each participant filled out using their own words

Interviews were held over Skype and ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours. These interviews allowed for greater exploration of the tour's lasting effects, as interviews took

[2] All interviewees were considered "Jewish" by Birthright's standards of having at least one Jewish parent. Some participants identified with certain sects of Judaism: Reform Judaism is typically the most liberal form of Judaism, followed by Conservative Judaism, and then Orthodox Judaism.

[3] Benji replied to the question about race with "???" but appeared to be white

place two to three years after interviewees' participation on the Walls2Windows tour. The conduct of the interviews was based on Burgess's (1984) "conversation with a purpose" and covered four main topics, as agenda items for the interview:

1. Participant's experience on a mainstream Jewish heritage trip to Israel
2. What the participant learned from the Walls2Windows tour
3. Participant's political views and activism
4. Participant's understanding of Jewish and Zionist identity and how it has changed

I coded for themes that illuminated participants' negotiations of their diaspora national identities and for moments of change and questioning of participants' political views. Interviewees were classified by two categories, one on national identity (Zionism), which was determined using a six-degree scale[4], and another on participants' level of criticism towards the state of Israel and its policies. To measure participants' level of criticism, interviewees were ranked on a scale of one to six, with one representing the most critical, "dissenting" views and six representing the most "supportive" views. In addition, participants were divided into two categories. Those labeled as "dissenters," voiced criticism of the Israeli state, solidarity with Palestinians, and opposition to the occupation. In contrast, "supportive" participants praised the Israeli military, showed involvement in Israel advocacy programs, and defended Israeli policies and actions. Participants were also categorized into Zionists and non-Zionists, in order to identify patterns between participants' levels of Zionism versus their political positions, and to explore the contradictory relationship between diaspora national belonging and political criticism of the base state.

[4] 1= Enthusiastically anti-Zionist, 2= Not Zionist, 3= Not Zionist but supports a Jewish state, 4= Zionist but hesitant to identify as such, 5= Zionist but somewhat critical of Zionism, 6= Enthusiastically Zionist

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND POLITICAL DISSENT

Despite the demographic homogeneity of the tour participants, each articulated a distinct relationship to Israel, Judaism, and Zionism. Roughly half of the interviewees identified as Zionist, while others did not but supported a Jewish state, and some were definitively anti-Zionist. While this range in Zionist identification is interesting in itself, what is perhaps even more striking is the counter-intuitive association between participants' identifications as Zionist and the intensity of their criticism of Israeli policies.

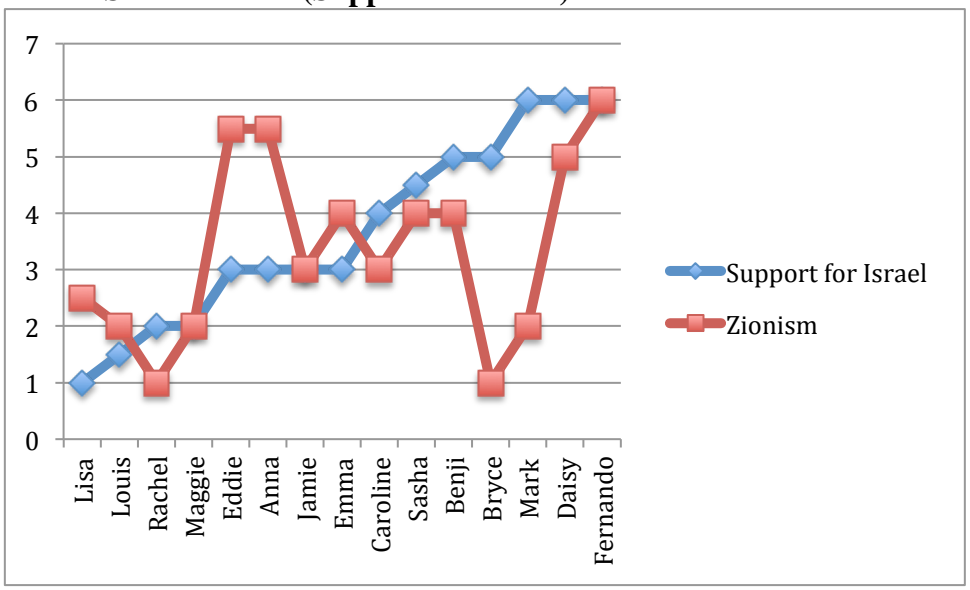
Every participant voiced some degree of criticism in regards to what they witnessed on the tour, ranging from those who directed their criticism towards radical settlers, like Daisy, who said, "like the amount of hatred I had towards them [the settlers], I can't explain it…I think that was my biggest learning experience from going on the Windows tour," to those who offered a systematic critique of the Israeli state, such as Anna:

> Now that I'm exposed, I think Israel should exist, but I think there are a lot of problems with the way the government is run and the way that they treat minorities and the fact that they don't really have a constitution and they don't protect everyone's rights, some of it is not the government, some of it is individual behavior, but I don't think the government does enough to stop that behavior.

Although all participants voiced a critical perspective on the situation after the tour, there was a distinct contrast between those participants who, in general, supported the Israeli state and its institutions (particularly the military) but criticized radical segments of the population, and those who directly criticized Israeli policies and the country as a whole. Those who reserved their criticism for radical segments of the population are referred to as "supporters," while those who voiced wider criticism of the state and its institutions are called "dissenters."

One would assume that self-identified Zionists, who believe in the importance of a Jewish state, would generally make up the same group of people who most ardently support Israeli policies. Likewise, one would expect that those participants who reject Jewish nationalism would also be those participants who articulate the harshest criticism towards Israel. Instead, the results of this study show an unsteady, and at times, contradictory relationship between participants' identification as Zionist and their support for Israel. The following chart plots each participant, starting with the most critical participant and ending with the least critical participant. One can see that the Zionist identity (how enthusiastically she or he accepted or rejected Zionism) of each participant does not consistently correlate with his or her level of criticism towards the Israeli state. Many of the more critical participants were some of the most Zionist; just as many of the least Zionist participants were among the strongest supporters of Israel.

Figure 1. Participants' Identification with Zionism (Zionism) vs. Their Level of Support for the State of Israel (Support for Israel)



*Levels of criticism towards Israel and Zionism were both measured on a scale of 1 to 6: 1=least Zionist & 6=most Zionist, 1=least critical of Israel & 6=most supportive of Israel

3.1.1 *Supporting the State without Nationalism*

The most dramatic difference in Zionism and politics can be seen towards the right end of the chart, where the most ardent supporters of Israel are plotted. Three of the participants with the most staunchly "supportive" politics were critical of Jewish nationalism and/or did not identify as a Zionist. For example, Mark, who stated, "I tend to side a little bit more pro-Israeli," espoused corresponding views such as a preoccupation with anti-Israel, anti-Western indoctrination in Palestinian society and unequivocally labeling Hamas, a terrorist organization. In addition, while most participants expressed feelings of deep sadness and anger regarding the recent assault on Gaza[5], Mark praised the Israeli army, commending their "restraint." He also recounted the assault through a narrative that blamed Hamas for the violence, noting their role in firing rockets, breaking the cease-fire, and kidnapping the Israeli teenagers in the West Bank (claims that were subsequently proven to be false or misleading). However, when it came to the question of Zionism, Mark gave one of the most critical responses:

> I consider myself pro-Israeli; I don't consider myself a Zionist. Like, I definitely support Israel, and I believe it definitely has an important place in this world and it's a wonderful country and I don't want to see the country go away … but at the same time, now it's at the cost of someone else's freedom and living too.

Despite his stated support for Israel, Mark does not identify as a Zionist, and appears to associate the Jewish state with oppression. Mark's relationship to Israel is characterized by political support of the state and its institutions, and simultaneous criticism of Israeli/Jewish nationalism. Unlike other participants, Mark showed little emotional wrestling with his Jewish identity as it relates to Israel, and did not appear to feel a personal connection to

[5] In the summer of 2014, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge, which killed over 2,200 people in Gaza, the majority of whom were civilians. http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_04_09_2014.pdf

Zionism. Therefore, while Mark is exceptionally supportive of the Israeli state/military, he was one of the least Zionist participants on the tour.

Benji is another participant who voiced clear "supportive" views, and simultaneously described his Zionism in relatively ambivalent terms. Initially, Benji was hesitant to say whether he identified as a Zionist. When asked if he identifies as a Zionist, he responded, "I think there are many forms of Zionism. I think that…wow it's a very loaded question." However, after circumventing a response, he explained that he does see himself as Zionist, but qualified it by referencing Palestinian nationalism. As he states, "my form of Zionism is we need a safe space for Jews because we are still under threat… but they [Palestinians] also need a safe space." Although Benji eventually identifies as a Zionist, he appears cautious of the label and, like Mark, shows relative opposition to the term. For example, at one point he says that he tries to act as a "counterforce" to the idea that "Zionism is the right way and Jewish nationalism is the right way."

Like Mark, Benji espoused militant views against Palestinians and in support of the Israeli military, despite his relatively low enthusiasm about Zionism. He considers Palestinian fighters to be terrorists and is deeply bothered by what he sees as the Palestinian culture of "glorifying martyrdom, homicide bombers, and violence." He also voices his support for the Israeli army, stating, "I also believe in the intelligence capacities of the IDF and the border patrol, and I have tremendous respect for them." Later he added, "I also have an affinity for believing in the necessity of sometimes the brutality of the IDF." While other interviewees sometimes expressed sympathy for individual soldiers, Benji and Mark were two of the only participants who supported the Israeli army as an institution. As such, it is

significant that the two participants who exhibited the strongest support for the Israeli military would also be among the minority of participants who contested Jewish nationalism.

This seemingly contradictory way of thinking was also seen with Bryce, who was largely uncritical of the Israeli state and army, but simultaneously rejected Zionism. Rather than articulating clear positions like Mark and Benji, Bryce was hesitant to take any strong stances on the conflict. As he explains:

> I had a really interesting relationship with the conflict or at least the politics there…I kind of fell into a group of friends that were very much in AIPAC… and ended up doing an internship there… I think AIPAC has a certain rep of hard right, like conservative, both of which I disagree with …I just felt very much uninformed…so that was why I wanted to study abroad out there and it was in studying abroad that I really saw the value of my connection with Israel, not being to politics, but freedom of the religion. Um, and since then I've really softened my involvement… and definitely if I had to say I was aligned …like J Street probably speaks more to my kind of, my sense.

Bryce was one of the only participants to refrain from voicing any criticism of the Israeli state, army, and even the settlers. Throughout the interview he avoided directly critiquing Israel, and made mostly neutral statements such as, "[the tour] provided me more of a lens or anecdotes to offer for conversation." While Bryce did not articulate explicitly "supportive" positions, his internship at AIPAC and participation on a Hasbara trip, coupled with his lack of criticism towards Israel, speak to his general political positioning. Yet despite all of these indications of his general alignment with "supportive" politics, Bryce was perhaps the most unequivocally non-Zionist participant. When asked whether he identified as a Zionist, he replied:

> Bryce: Definitely not. Definitely not.
>
> Interviewer: And why not?
>
> Bryce: To me Zionism is a sense of returning…kind of returning to the lands… that's not appealing to me. I think it's important for me to know that there is a Jewish…a

> place that, where Jews are welcomed and communities are built…I'm not sure if that place needs to be a state. I'm not sure if it should be a state, in fact.

3.1.2 *Pro-Palestinian Zionists*

On the other end of the spectrum, were the respondents who reported "dissenting" political views, but identified as Zionist and/or strongly supported the existence of a Jewish state. This group, the largest category among interviewees, included Anna, who explains, "I think that you should be able to say you're a Zionist, but I'm also a Zionist who's pro-Palestinian, I think that you can't say that (laughs), it seems contradictory to say that, but that's basically how I am." While Anna repeatedly emphasized her love for Israel, she also spoke harshly of the state, even claiming it was perpetrating "cultural genocide." She also insisted that she would not give money to Israel, and would only donate to progressive, left-wing NGOs, a significant stance considering the American Jewish tradition of donating money to Israel through nationalist organizations like the Jewish National Fund.

Jamie also took a strong political stance against the Israeli state, while still speaking favorably of Zionism. Unlike Anna, Jamie did not identify as Zionist, however she expressed an underlying attachment to Jewish nationalism. For Jamie, her (non) Zionist identity seemed to hold great importance and was a source of ideological turmoil:

> Right off the bat I would say I'm not a Zionist. But like what does that really mean? I think we needed a place to go, it was such a hard time, there was no way we could have thought through what it would have looked like taking over [Palestine]. But I think the way that people are oppressing the Palestinians…that's what really gets to me. And I think, you know, we need a Jewish state, I think going to the [Western] Wall is beautiful… it's amazing what Jewish people have done in Israel and around the world. And I think Judaism is amazing. And so that's why it's so conflicting.

Jamie expressed a deep love for Israel, despite her explicit opposition to the Israeli government. Statements such as, "I'm proud of Israel and what's it done" and "I love Israel

like a home" can be contrasted with her unequivocally critical positions regarding Israel's treatment of Palestinians. For example, in recounting an experience from Jewish summer camp in the US, she states, "I've heard probably a hundred times, the Israeli scouts saying, *Israel doesn't attack unless we're provoked*, over and over, and my feeling is that we are attacking the Palestinians every single day." In addition, Jamie was the only participant to declare that she was uncomfortable with returning to Israel, because she would not want to support it financially:

> And to this day I will often say, I would totally live in Israel, except politically. And I miss it so much and I haven't been back because where I am now, I don't want to give my money to the Israeli government, because I don't like what they're doing with it or what they're choosing not to do with it…I love it [Israel] like a home…and I think we [tour participants] all kind of had a narrative where we felt really really really torn…I'm getting upset thinking about it… I realized they [Palestinians] are so severely oppressed here, and so what are they really supposed to do. And that being said, there is a lot of guilt I feel for looking at Israel so critically.

Relative to other participants, Jamie is considerably sympathetic to Zionism. Although she doesn't identify as Zionist, she clearly maintains a deep emotional and ideological bond to Jewish nationalism. This can be contrasted with her dissenting politics, which became particularly evident when I asked how she would respond if someone asked if she was pro-Israel. She replied, "I would say it's really complicated and I would start having a conversation with them, but my first instinct is to say no." This negative response can be compared with her response to the same question of being pro-Palestinian:

> Yeah! Kind of. I mean I would say yeah… I know logically there are probably some parts of the Palestinian narrative that I am making to be more idealistic…but I would say I feel more empathy to the Palestinian people.

Participants like Jamie demonstrate the ideological difficulties of diaspora members who maintain highly emotional, nationalist sentiments towards a "base" country, while still espousing criticism of the state.

Several other interviewees expressed a similar affinity for Jewish nationalism, while simultaneously holding dissenting political views. For example, Emma, who stated explicitly, "I'm pro-Palestinian. I mean it is what it is. That's what I am," also voiced a relatively favorable view of Zionism, "I like that there's a Jewish state…I like that there's a place that they can go, especially Jews from the Middle East that were persecuted… Overall I think it's a good thing."

Eddie was another Zionist-identified participant with critical views of Israel. For Eddie, reclaiming his Zionist identity appeared to allow him to maintain legitimacy amid his political dissent. When asked how traveling to the OPT affected his Zionism, he replied:

> It definitely made me question it. But I think that in questioning and then coming through that, it kind of made it [my Zionism] stronger …Coming to the realization of all the problems, and being able to think my way around them, and recognize what a Jewish state means to me, sort of made it stronger I guess, and sort of validated the fact that I can still call myself a Zionist, despite what I believe.

Eddie seemed motivated to maintain his Zionist identity, despite holding opinions that he knew others might consider anti-Zionist. In addition, the quotation above reveals how questioning his identity, and experiencing tension with it, ultimately served to strengthen it. He elaborates:

> To me it [Zionism] means having a safe place for my people…who have not had a safe place in many or most places that they've been for a long time… to me it's just …like any other sort of nationalism… Zionism comes down to the need for a Jewish state… so in my mind, Zionism doesn't have to mean excluding anyone, it just sort of means, at least the Jewish people have like a safe and secure place… in my mind, even a bi-national state would still be a Jewish state … I just have an attachment to that word [Zionism] because I'm Israeli, because of the ideals that my family fought for, for so long, were… really noble ideals of what Zionism is.

Some of the other participants with critical views towards Israel appeared to identify as Zionist out of social pressure or convention. As Sasha explains:

> I never know what to call myself, I guess I'm a Zionist. But someone was telling me once it's the way it works, that I'm a Zionist because such a country should exist. But I'm not always pro-Israel, like I am, but I don't always agree with everything they do.

Similarly Caroline states, "I nominally identify as like a Zionist left-wing person. Even though I'm not like die-hard Zionist. Like, I'm flexible. I don't really know." When I followed up by asking her whether a national Jewish identity is important to her, she said, "I don't know. Like no, to me like Zionist…it's so difficult…I think Israel has a right to exist but I don't know like what Israel should be. … It's really difficult." Both Sasha and Caroline similarly wrestled with being one of the only "left-wing" people in extremely Zionist, Jewish environments. Sasha attends a predominately Jewish college on the East Coast, while Caroline works for an organization that runs Jewish education programs in Israel. Neither was particularly quick to identify as a Zionist, and both expressed hesitation in their answers. Additionally, both Sasha and Caroline alluded to how they are perceived and labeled by others, implying social pressure, and perhaps a sense of obligation to identify as Zionists.

3.1.3 ***Not-so-blind Zionism***

The remaining six participants held views that "matched" their political positions, either as "dissenting" non-Zionists or "supportive" Zionists. Fernando and Daisy were the only two participants who clearly identified as Zionists and espoused decidedly supportive positions. Fernando said he "absolutely" identifies as a Zionist, and said that while he knows other people entered into a crisis over their Zionism after being exposed to the situation in Palestine, this was not the case for him. Daisy said she "definitely" identifies as a Zionist. After I asked her how the tour influenced her Zionist identity, she explained:

> I think it just made like my blind Zionism not so blind, and it's kind of like more of a choice being Zionist. And understanding the parameters, or the conflicts around

> saying that you're a Zionist and what that entails, what it means supporting what's going on, and it's hard. Of course I can't say that I full on support what's going on in Hebron, but at the same time it's like, if I'm Zionist I do, right? So, I don't support it, but …your understanding of what it means to be a Zionist, or the difficulty of what it is to be a Zionist… it includes a lot of hardship and conflicts, and more than one people, and thought, so that definitely took me from like swimming in one direction, like "yeah Zionist!" to another more difficult route of Zionism.

As Daisy reveals, even those who staunchly identify as pro-Israel and Zionist may find themselves wrestling with their relationship to Zionism after a tour to the West Bank. Therefore, while on the one hand, the high number of "Zionist" participants with critical views of Israel reveals the ability of "dissenting" diaspora members to maintain nationalist ties; on the other hand, the fact that all but one participant showed some ideological struggle with Zionism, if not a total dismissal of it, demonstrates that such tours certainly trouble diaspora national ties and can put them into crisis.

3.2 ACTIVISM

The final category includes non-Zionists with "dissenting" views. While there is nothing unusual about a correlation between non-Zionism and criticism of Israel, what was significant about the individuals in this category is that, overall, they exhibited the lowest levels of conventional activism in regards to Israel/Palestine. In addition, these participants also repeatedly referenced their own lack of knowledge on the issue. As Louis says, "I don't think I'm arrogant enough to think that my ideas of how you can achieve peace in the Middle East would mean anything at all." Maggie made similar comments such as, "I know there's a lot that I just don't understand. There's so much I don't think I will understand too." Like Louis and Maggie, Rachel also alluded to her lack of knowledge about the situation, but clearly opposed the idea of a Jewish state:

> Having a country that's based on having something called like a Jewish state… just didn't fit in with my beliefs of how the world should function… I just never understood how that could be ok, how you could treat people, how a country that is going to treat people differently, treat them better because of their religion or ethnicity… I just don't see any way how that could be ok. Even though I don't have enough information to necessarily say why… that was just always the underlying feeling.

This self-identification of interviewees' own lack of knowledge possibly explains such participants lower levels of activism. Their political engagement after the tour usually amounted to a heightened interest in the region and a tendency to voice opinions in conversations about Israel/Palestine. As Maggie explains:

> I think more than anything, when I read articles now that mention Israel, something goes off, "am I getting one side? Like, ok it's the Wall Street Journal, so I'm probably getting the Israeli side of this, "remember that." That's about it.

Rachel, another "dissenting" non-Zionist explains that for geographical reasons, Israel/Palestine is not a major focus for her:

> If Israel was a place that I would have been staying longer… if it was a place I lived, I would want to be involved in more ways… but it very rarely comes up, I don't have a lot of Jewish friends, so Israel is not a common topic.

Unlike other participants who understood their relationship to Israel through the lens of transnational diaspora, Rachel felt unmotivated to act on account of her physical distance from Israel/Palestine. For participants with strong diaspora ties, not being physically located in Israel did not seem to affect their decision to become politically engaged.

The only dissenting non-Zionist who demonstrated a relatively high level of engagement was Lisa, whose response to whether she identifies as a Zionist was uncharacteristic for an individual who supports BDS[6], works with Palestinian organizations, and lives in the West Bank:

[6] BDS stands for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel

> I really haven't done any reading on Zionism or the origins of Zionism, I've just seen the results of Zionism … I can't answer that as an informed answer…I really want to do some reading on it … I would definitely call myself an anti-Zionist because of that, but really not sure.

Therefore while Lisa certainly qualifies as a "dissenting" non-Zionist, she shows a deeper level of reflection and sympathy for Jewish nationalism than other less engaged, non-Zionist dissenters. This suggests that there may be a link between one's readiness to dismiss Zionism and their level of political engagement in the region.

3.2.1 *Who Counts as an Activist?*

Although Lisa did not identify as an activist, she showed a high level of political engagement. For example, when I asked if she was involved in anything surrounding the recent assault on Gaza, she replied:

> I've been desperate to get to a protest, or to have any, do anything, I've called, I've written letters to my senators, I've called, I've tried to engage people and have people send also to their senators, and yeah, I actually tomorrow am having a meeting with these women to organize a protest for Friday.

Lisa's hesitancy to identify as an activist shows that even those participants with very high levels of involvement do not see themselves as particularly active on this issue. When asked about his activism, Eddie exhibited a similar tendency. In the following quote, he elaborates on this, explaining that he does consider many of his activities to be political, even though others probably would:

> I think a lot of the things that I wouldn't call political, other people would call political. I worked in education a lot in Israel … I worked at the peace camp… I coordinated some dialogue sessions in Ramle between the different communities, so I don't consider that political, but I think a lot of people would consider that political…My thing is sort of, the more I can be visible as a Jewish person and as an Israeli person in the Muslim or Arab world, so that people can see that there are also Jews like me, there are also Israelis like me that speak Arabic that care about the community, that is a powerful thing.

Lisa and Eddie were not unique, as this type of self-criticism in terms of activism was evident among most interviewees, where participants' standards for involvement were much higher than their actual activism. During the in-depth interviews, very few participants referred to themselves as activists in regards to Israel/Palestine. Nonetheless, despite not identifying as activists, every participant demonstrated some degree of political engagement, ranging from reading news articles on the conflict to founding a college organization committed to peace-building in Israel/Palestine. These findings are consistent with the tour surveys, which revealed that a majority of participants felt an increased desire to become involved in activism related to Israel/Palestine after participating on the tour.

Among the 105 survey respondents, a large majority, 83% of participants, indicated that they would like to seek more information after the tour. As discussed in the methods section, this high percentage could be due in part to participants catering their answers to please the tour organizers. Yet even with this taken into consideration, this particularly high statistic strongly suggests that most participants intend to stay intellectually engaged with the conflict. 80% of participants stated they would like to return to the West Bank, which not only shows a desire to continue to interact with Palestinians, but also suggests a reduction in fears about traveling to the West Bank. As discussed in the next section, many participants entered the tour with deep-seated fears about traveling to the OPT, so the fact that 80% would like to return shows a significant change in participants' attitudes towards travel in the OPT. Finally, 66% of survey respondents stated that the tour motivated them to be an active member in efforts for a just peace in Israel/Palestine. While being an active member may mean different things to different people, this percentage suggests that two in three

participants felt some desire to take action after going on the tour, and potentially saw themselves as agents of change in creating a more just and peaceful future.

While almost all of the participants remained active in efforts for peace and justice, very few were interested in attending either the pro-Palestinian protests or the pro-Israel protests that took place during the 2014 war in Gaza. The following quotes demonstrate participants' hesitations in identifying with either group of activists:

> Emma: The pro-Palestinian protests that I used to see in California, and California has a very sort of different anti-Israel feeling than the East Coast, as far as I'm concerned, they were having ridiculous signs that didn't make me connect to the situation, they just made me think that they were crazy. Like they would say stop the Holocaust in Palestine. And once you start talking like that, then you really lose people, as opposed to actually having a real protest, a real conversation about what's going on. So anything that's too one-sided on either end …I can't be involved with it because it's doing the exact same thing as a pro-Zionist person would do, just pro-Palestinian.
>
> Caroline: I could never support like Hasbara, I wouldn't. I'm very critical of the idea of the Israeli government and stuff but…I'm not gonna go to these like "If not now"[7] demonstrations either. I mean, like, I don't know. The "If not now" thing is kind of interesting, just because, while I do feel like I practically could be one of them, I'm just like a hair away from being one of them, but I also just feel like their demonstrations have been really gimmicky and very like, PR driven. I don't know maybe I'm just cynical.
>
> Sasha: I haven't gone to any pro-Israel rallies in New York because it's just so uncomfortable, not that I'm not pro-Israel, but these people are very hard-line, and I just, I can't. I'll be honest with you, like I feel weird, but I also wouldn't go to the other things that are like free Palestine rallies, like I wouldn't be going to those either… so I just wouldn't even know which one to go to.
>
> Eddie: A lot of the pro-Palestinian groups out there, that I basically agree with on everything, also have either a lot of anti-Semitism or just like, little things that make me uncomfortable, that are not like huge, but that…I don't feel like I can get on board with, even if I agree with almost everything that they stand for…. there's sort of no awareness of….what it would mean for an Israeli or a Jewish person, you know, so certain things that, like one thing for me is like the apartheid thing, or just the idea of the Zionist movement being a colonial movement. You know that's not malicious, and I'm sure it's with good intentions, but I just feel like, that offends me.

[7] "I Not Now" is a leftist movement of young American Jews that arose in response to the 2014 assault on Gaza: http://ifnot.net/

Although many of the "dissenting" Zionists did not attend protests for either side, this is not to say that they were not engaged in efforts for peace in Israel/Palestine. After the tour, Sasha founded a peace organization on her right-wing campus, Emma interned with Walls2Windows, and Eddie continued to volunteer in Palestinian communities.

In terms of participants who engaged in traditional forms of activism, Daisy, a "supportive" Zionist, was the only participant who attended a protest during the war:

> I've only gone to pro-Israel rallies… I'm active in the FIDF[8] here, I plan on being active when I move, being part of the young leadership... I almost joined the [Israeli] army, but I didn't because I'm selfish (laughs)…And active in the Palestinian aspect? More if I'm socializing with somebody and they have no idea, I definitely voice my opinions when it comes to the struggle, like some people just don't know, and I'm sure you encounter them all the time, and you can't stand it, so I definitely reveal as much of the hardships, that's more I wouldn't say it's "activist," but it's on a more intimate basis.

The fact that Daisy interpreted the question on activism to refer to both Israelis and Palestinians, suggests that she feels connected to both groups, with some desire to support Palestinians. Nonetheless, Daisy, along with other "supportive" participants, such as Fernando and Bryce, continued to work for mainstream Zionist causes, as seen with Daisy's continued involvement in FIDF. Likewise, Fernando continued to head a group that worked to strengthen economic cooperation between Argentina and Israel (although he now brings group members to the West Bank when they travel to Israel). Bryce, who was scheduled to intern at AIPAC after going on the Walls2Windows tour, decided to continue with his internship (despite having reservations immediately after the tour). However, after the internship and in light of his experience with Walls2Windows, he now no longer identifies with AIPAC and positions himself closer to J-Street's politics. Thus while the tour certainly

[8] Friends of the IDF is a "pro-Israel" Zionist NGO that raises money to support Israeli soldiers

impacted "supportive" participants' ideologies, it did not consistently cause them to abandon their involvement in mainstream, Zionist activism.

3.3 HUMANIZATION AND EMPATHY

3.3.1 *Danger and Fear*

While the Walls2Windows tour may not have caused some participants to abandon their previous activities in support of Israel, this is not to say that such participants walked away from the tour unchanged. Before embarking on the tour, participants were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how dangerous it is to travel to the West Bank. Before the trip, participants' answers ranged from 1 to 5, with an average of 2.73, a mode of 3, and a median of 3. After the trip however, participants' answers ranged from 1 to 4, with an average of 2.28, a mode of 2, and a median of 2.

Table 2. Survey Respondents' Rankings of How Dangerous is the West Bank?

	How Dangerous is the West Bank (Before the W2W Tour)	**How Dangerous is the West Bank (After the W2W Tour)**
Average Rating	2.73	2.28
Median Rating	3	2
Most Common Rating	3	2

*All ratings were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = not dangerous at all, to 5 = very dangerous

These statistics show that, after participating on the tour, participants experienced a shift in their perceptions of the West Bank as dangerous. This suggests that stereotypes and fears are pervasive among tour participants, but that they can be reduced through actual experiences in the OPT and interaction with Palestinians. This finding complements

participants' self-described experiences with Palestinians on the tour. Jews who travel to the West Bank are often met with shock and worry from their friends and family. Several participants described hiding their participation on the tour from loved ones, such as Eddie, who explains, "I didn't tell any Israelis or my family or anything, so no one really discouraged me, but for the reason that I didn't tell them." Fernando took a similar approach, "I didn't really discuss it. I didn't bring it up with my family. I didn't want to scare people who would say "ya well you shouldn't go" I didn't want to expose myself to the situation; I didn't want people telling me not to go. So I was like I'm just going to go and not tell them."

Jewish-Americans are bombarded by a pervasive Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism that perpetuates stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs, and in particular Palestinians, as dangerous and violent. The Islamophobia that is present throughout the United States is intensified by further demonization that sometimes occurs at Jewish day schools and Synagogues. As Maggie recounts from her days in Jewish Sunday School:

> They showed us like the Palestinian Sesame Street where they have all the kids with the guns. They showed us that, like "that's the enemy," and that's about all we got… It's pretty shocking, I mean you definitely develop a sense of the enemy.

Therefore, despite the abundance of foreign visitors who safely travel throughout the West Bank each day, such racially motivated fears are common among tourists, especially Jews, and especially Jewish-Israelis. Tour participants often go into the West Bank having internalized such prejudices against Palestinians, for example, Louis explains:

> I went there expecting Palestinians to be really anti-American, anti-Jewish, and I guess anti-Israeli, and just be kind of bad and aggressive and horrible. And I was expecting Israelis to be the ones who are, I guess, there for a reason… and then I ended up leaving with the exact opposite feeling, and I realized that it was the Palestinians with a welcoming, open culture.

Tour participants with Israeli citizenship in particular showed heightened levels of fear during the tour, as they are legally barred from entering the West Bank and usually maintain a stronger collective memory of Palestinian violence against Israelis, including kidnappings and deadly clashes in the cities visited on the tour. Among the interviewees, Daisy, was one of the participants who held Israeli citizenship:

> I thought it was just going to be like the West Bank checkpoints rather than going into proper Palestinian territories, so when I found out, I was pretty scared. I was just like oh my god, I'm breaking the law, and I remember telling my boyfriend, I don't know if I can go through with this… I was just afraid that I might be taken as like a prize…that's what my fear was… we were walking out of the territories and we were going to the checkpoint, and some Palestinian authority who was like dressed up in his military uniform and stuff was like staring at me, that scared me…I feel like I could be a really easy captive.

Daisy was not the only participant to express such feelings. Sasha, who did not hold Israeli citizenship, expressed similar fears:

> I was such a nervous wreck the whole time I was there, I thought someone was going to kill me, not kill me but, so I was nervous because I had never been looked at by that many people that horribly.

While Sasha and Daisy's fears were exceptionally pronounced, other participants expressed similar sentiments of worry and distrust. This fear was often interwoven with participants' more practical fear of breaking their programs' bans on travel to the West Bank. Several of the tour participants were currently enrolled in long-term Zionist programs in Israel that explicitly prohibited travel to the OPT. These participants risked punishment from their sponsoring organizations, which could amount to the termination of their internships and scholarships.

Implied in this strict ban on travel to the West Bank, is the underlying message that Palestinians are dangerous, and under no circumstances is such travel worth the risk. These restrictive policies are often bolstered by racist rhetoric that reinforces participants'

prejudices against Palestinians. As Maggie recounts from the moment her Birthright bus drove by the separation wall "They [birthright] make it [West Bank] look like this run-down, no rules, ghetto of some kind, it's just like the heathens on the other side, it's just like so ridiculous. Like if Israel wasn't there to control, to contain them..." Program coordinators appear to prefer to leave the West Bank unexplored, so that they can shape participants understandings of Palestinians through propaganda that reinforces negative stereotypes of Palestinians as violent, uncompromising, and uncivilized.[9]

With this type of depiction of Palestinians and the OPT openly promoted by organizations like Birthright, it is not surprising that few participants challenge their organization's policies. Any tourist who chooses to complement his or her birthright trip with the Walls2Windows tour is likely to already hold somewhat critical positions or at least a curiosity to challenge their current views. Making the choice to break the ban can be difficult, not only because of the potential risk of expulsion from their programs, but also because, despite self-proclamations of open-mindedness, prejudiced views against Palestinians are of course prevalent among American Jews, as discussed by a number of the interviewees. The following quote from Benji demonstrates the thought-process behind his decision to break the ban, and also how participants' fears of breaking rules are often tied to deeper fears for their safety.

> The fact that I had to sort of keep the tour a secret from the administration was again something I sort of had to wrap my head around …I think I really came to Israel at that time with zero intention of going to the West Bank …I think the political situation was pretty tense… …I think the restriction by the program *davka* … the prohibition was ridiculous. And when Andrew [his roommate] volunteered with you guys… he said that "yo they're safe; I do them every two weeks…come." …I think

[9] http://www.jewlicious.com/2012/06/the-unofficial-13-dos-and-donts-of-birthright-israel/
http://birthrightdetoured.blogspot.com/2008/08/another-unbearable-discussion.html
http://mondoweiss.net/2014/10/birthright-participants-present

> that was my opening to say, you know okay, I'm going to be safe…I looked at the itinerary and I looked at the history of the organization and how they've been giving these tours and I said…"okay…you know I'm willing to do it." [I also started to think] again, how ridiculous is it that…I can't speak with my counterpart? I can't see my counterpart.

For Benji, the travel ban actually appeared to be more of a motivating factor to go on the tour, while the real element of deterrence was fear for his safety. Benji is one of several participants whose fears may have prevented him from traveling to the West Bank, had it not been for a personal connection that he trusted. The number of participants who described this need for an "insider" whom they could trust in order to gain the courage to go on the tour, exemplifies the underlying distrust that many Jewish tourists hold towards Palestinians. Therefore, while some participants expressed no qualms about traveling to the West Bank, in general, most treated their travel there as a serious undertaking that required careful consideration, usually due to fears for their safety.

3.3.2 *Developing Empathy; Overcoming Prejudice*

This experience of overcoming fears about traveling to the West Bank was frequently coupled with a process of "humanization" that challenged participants' preconceived stereotypes of Palestinians as dangerous and violent. As Mark explains:

> One thing that really did stand out to me is talking to the Palestinians. You know it seems like no one wants peace and that's definitely not the case. As I said, the vast majority of everyone I talked to both on the Windows tour and elsewhere you know wanted peace, and were not these you know gun-happy or explosive-happy people that just wanted to blow up themselves or whatever. … if you're able to separate yourself from the emotion and really take a wholesome look you know they just want the basic necessities and they want to be able to have a normal life and not have to worry about oppression from other people.

Anna voices a similar reaction:

> All I could think was these are such lovely people, and all they want is the opportunity and chance to live the way the rest of us do, and they deserve that. … these are just honest, good-hearted people, they don't want to kill anyone, they don't want to hurt anyone, they just want to go to work and provide for their families, and shouldn't everyone have that right?

In addition to those participants such as Mark and Louis, who understood this humanization in terms of "correcting" prejudiced views of Palestinians, others described it in terms of increased feelings of empathy with Palestinians. For example, Fernando states, in response to hearing a Palestinian speak about the situation in Hebron, "you really feel empathetic on the tours…you can definitely understand if you put yourself in this situation." In addition, Daisy explains:

> I never had a face to the name, and now it's like, I can still remember this guy's face that just like stuck out to me and you know, they are people. And it's sad when you think about the situation, you always think about the aggressors who are involved, and you don't necessarily think about the casual, you know the civilian, and now that I've been able to meet some of the civilians… it definitely changed my opinion, or like my sympathy.

Daisy is quick to correct herself by stating that the experience of meeting Palestinians changed her *sympathy* rather than her *opinion*. Daisy, like many of the "supportive" participants, underwent a profound experience of humanization, while still maintaining political positions that supported Israeli policies and institutions. In particular, such participants appeared to be moved by experiences where they had warm, positive interactions with their Palestinian hosts. For example, Louis was struck by an experience with a cab driver who asked him if he was Jewish, and after replying yes, the driver spoke at length about how grateful he was to have him here in Palestine. Bryce was moved by the generosity of a family from the refugee camp:

> I was blown away by how the fact that, having tea together, or coffee that always stuck with me, that, you know, even people who have such a hard time…such

> circumstances and just how they make guests feel warm and hospitable, …[it] made me feel very much welcomed.

For Benji, such moments of warmth and generosity were significant not so much due to the family's dire situation, but in light of political differences. As he explains:

> It was very interesting that the brother of this…who they would consider a martyr, whom I might consider a terrorist, …he gave me several firm handshakes and he patted me on the shoulder and he even welcomed me for a hug as we were walking out.

Jamie expresses a similar sentiment, as she states, "The main thing is that it [the tour] humanized it [Palestine]. And I felt it more deeply because I have images that I can associate with what I'm learning and hearing about it."

3.3.3 *Humanization and Information*

The tendency to recount experiences of increased empathy and humanization towards Palestinians correlated with participants' political positions. Every participant with "supportive" politics reported a profound "humanization" experience, while most of the participants with "dissenting" views did not, and instead saw the tour as a source of information. Dissenting participants usually focused on how the tour provided them with knowledge and information to strengthen their opinions and back up *feelings* they had before the tour. For example, Eddie talked about having the same views and opinions after the tour, but gaining more knowledge and evidence to support his feelings.

> Just seeing everything made me feel stronger about things… I felt like it gave me more of the tools to be able to deal with these things, just in the sense that I was able to think about things that I hadn't thought about before, and just have a perspective that I didn't have before, you know before that, I couldn't say I've been there, I've seen it, you know?

Also for Rachel, rather than experiencing a process of humanization or feelings of increased empathy, she referred to the tour more so in terms of gaining knowledge:

> I felt much more informed after that, like much more knowledgeable, and like I could support the more intangible feelings that I had been feeling... I felt like I had learned more, so that I could actually put words behind my feelings … I don't think I would have necessarily felt much differently if I hadn't gone… so I would have felt that way regardless and maybe my thoughts on the Palestinian situation would have been a little bit more blurry, I wouldn't have had as much tangible things to think about and to hold on to in my thought process.

This pattern could be explained in that those participants with "dissenting" politics were less likely to dehumanize Palestinians in the first place. However, regardless of the reason for this trend, such a correlation suggests that humanization and empathy do not always prompt a subsequent change in politics. In other words, some tourists with newly realized empathy for Palestinians will still continue to support policies that oppress them.

This is all not to deny that increased empathy and reduced prejudices are not positive results of these tours. Despite maintaining support for Israeli policies, the "supportive" participants still exhibited significant changes in their behaviors and opinions. For example, Benji describes no longer tolerating jokes about soldiers harassing Palestinians:

> With my own eyes I saw how dehumanizing that is … I can't joke at that type of thing anymore… I sort of vomit a little bit inside when I hear the joking about something as filthy and disgusting and dehumanizing as that.

Similarly Daisy recounts an incident where she stood up to anti-Arab rhetoric:

> I think I'm more outspoken on those issues, because I think that I sympathize more with others, for example, we were at this rally …and there was just some old fart who was crossing the street with an Israeli flag …and was like "let's just kill them all." And I was like, dude, I went up to him and I was like, you can't say that… he was just like oh, I didn't mean it like that, it's just like a figure of speech. And I was like "that it's a figure of speech is not ok."

Therefore while the tour did seem to motivate participants to hold less prejudiced views of Palestinians, and to subsequently stand up to bigotry and violence, it is important to ask what

this change in perception amounts to in terms of stated political positions and conventional forms of activism. How beneficial are the effects of these humanizing experiences to the Palestinian cause? Is this something we can even measure? Do they normalize injustice by allowing people to relieve themselves of responsibility? Do they individualize issues like state violence to be a problem of a few extremists, so as to prevent participants from understanding the state's role in the conflict?

3.3.4 *Separating Empathy from Politics*

It is often assumed that increased empathy for a group of people will lead to greater concern for their rights and well-being. While all of the "supportive" participants reported a process of humanization and/or increased empathy with Palestinians after the tour, this did not consistently lead to changes in their political views regarding Israel's culpability. Such participants relied on a variety of cognitive maneuvers to justify their continued support for Israel's oppressive policies in the face of their newfound empathy for Palestinians.

The two main strategies that participants used to explain their support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians included seeing themselves as victims in need of a "safe haven" (i.e. a Jewish state) or scapegoating radical segments of the population. The first strategy allowed participants to see themselves as the more vulnerable population, therefore justifying violence against Palestinians for the sake of their "own people's" safety. The second strategy of scapegoating settlers allowed participants to recognize the severity of Palestinians' situation without faulting the state of Israel. By focusing on the acts of radical settlers, participants were able to condemn the effects of the occupation without criticizing the Israeli government or army. As Daisy explains:

> Ok, the settlers there are crazy. … I think it was a very valuable experience for me, the Jews that live in Hebron and other like super religious territories in the West Bank that they claim like Schem and whatever, they're insane, like they are so radical crazy, he almost ran over us, so aggressive, disgusting people …I felt so sorry for the Palestinians and their situation, but I guess the people who I could most sympathize with are the soldiers … they're hated both ways… and that was really hard to see.

In addition to Daisy, Fernando, and Benji also singled out radical settlers for their role in the conflict:

> I think the biggest question is how do we move past this culture of… …glorifying martyrdom, glorifying homicide bombers, glorifying violence…I think the same is true on the Israeli side …to see this growth of radicalism, violent radicalism, within the Jewish community which here so far has been pretty much marginalized, but to see it growing …and to see it being so provocative is really bothersome to me.

In this quote, Benji equates radical settlers' violence with Palestinian extremism, moving blame away from the Israeli state and instead towards extremists on both sides of the conflict.

Fernando, arguably the most "supportive" participant on the tour, also criticized the settlers:

> I cannot myself identify with the settlers …coming from a secular background …the argument that they are there because God said so. At that moment I felt a little bit of anger… I am very critical of the settlement policy.

While a focus on the settlers was less common among those participants with dissenting views, participants like Jamie also raised the issue of the settlements.

> And the settlers also really rubbed me the wrong way, and I mentioned them speeding up. …I just thought it was disgusting, absolutely disgusting, and you know when I hear constantly that settlers are settling into these areas … there's just a power trip going on, and I think given my Grandma's a Holocaust survivor, I would have a way bigger family if the Holocaust didn't happen, and the Jewish population would be so much bigger, and I was just thinking about that and thinking about how we were treated and the parallels with how we're treating the Palestinians, and it really makes me sick.

Unlike the supportive participants however, Jamie concludes with, "how *we're* treating the Palestinians." Rather than using the settlers as a scapegoat, she sees herself, and all Jews, as part of the oppressor group. While Jamie was able to tie her criticism of the settlers to the

Israeli state, those participants who primarily saw settlers as isolated extremists maintained general support for Israeli institutions, especially the army.

Through cognitive methods such as this, many of the participants expressed strong levels of empathy with Palestinians, while still maintaining a generalized support for the state of Israel. In fact, those participants who described the strongest personal reactions to meeting Palestinians simultaneously retained the strongest support for Israeli policies and state violence against them. Despite their newfound humanization, participants such as Daisy and Mark supported Israel's actions in Gaza, while others such as Bryce and Benji also maintained relatively supportive views. Fernando even articulated his intentional separation of his empathy towards Palestinians from a change in his political positions, as he explains:

> The majority of the people on the tour didn't really know about this issue, didn't really know about politics. So if you don't know anything… you go to this sort of tour and immediately think, "oh, Israel is an apartheid state"... because you can feel honest empathy for them [Palestinians]. But if you don't sort of develop the political background, a history of the region, it [the tour] doesn't seem fair.

He later expressed a similar sentiment, when he explained that despite the empathy he felt for Palestinians suffering from the separation barrier, this empathy did not affect his belief in the wall's necessity:

> I understand the necessity of having this separation barrier… I believe that human lives are more important than…you know, it's better to save a life than having people just waiting for hours to get back. Unfortunately it's a necessity. But nonetheless… these people have to go through, a lot of things, just to get on with their daily lives. So, I was very empathetic at that moment.

Fernando's resistance to letting his empathy change his political positions was exceptional, as most participants with "supportive" views expressed some distress over their political positions. For example, Sasha, who explained in reference to the Israeli assault on Gaza, "I hate the fact that we have to be there and it's killing me that so many people are dying,

because I also want my safety, and I feel guilty saying that, and it's hard, I've been really really really torn about how I feel." Similarly, when I asked Daisy whether it is conflicting for her to support the war in Gaza after her experiences in the West Bank, she replied:

> Yeah of course… I feel for the citizens, the casualties, I fear for the mothers, I can't imagine, not even mothers, but anyone who is not involved with Hamas … but at the same time, it's kind of like, I have to stand by Israel at this time, just because …Israel's existence is more important for me, because I'm Israeli, I'm Jewish… Grandfather was in the Holocaust, my dad was oppressed, kicked out of Iraq, grew up in a tent, my Grandmother on my mother's side witnessed her brother's head being chopped off in front of her because of the pogroms, yes I'm in America, I feel secure here for now, but it's like, the anti-Semitism is rising… I fear for my people, I really feel like we need to have a safe haven and to defend ourselves. It's kind of like, I don't prioritize one life over another, but since I do belong to these people, I side with them, I have to.

Daisy's answer is interesting because she does not defend Israel's actions as moral or strategically necessary, but instead describes her support for Israel as an act of ethnic solidarity rooted in her people's previous suffering. For Daisy, along with the other "supportive" Zionists, anti-Semitism and the need for a "safe haven" were leading justifications for their continued support of Israeli violence against Palestinians, despite their increased empathy towards them.

For others however, collective Jewish consciousness of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust appeared to facilitate rather than hinder empathy with the Palestinians. Several participants expressed the belief that Jews should be more conscious of other groups' oppression on account of their own experience with persecution. For example Mark explains:

> I think it would be very hypocritical to have a Jewish state that was founded on the principles of everything that happened in history, especially the Holocaust, and all the oppression throughout the years, and then to try to do the same thing to other people, I don't think that's right either.

Maggie used similar language of "doing the same thing" to Palestinians:

> To go and see that all these people who escaped the Holocaust are doing the exact same thing, like not exact, but like pretty much, it's like phase one of the Holocaust. So how does no one in this country put it together? Cause nobody does! Like when you talk to anybody on Birthright it's like this is all sane… You feel like a crazy person. To me it sounded like there was no difference between phase one of the Holocaust and like seeing these refugees camps and seeing what's going on there… it looks like the exact same thing.

In addition, Jamie reflects:

> In reflection, thinking about going there and standing there and waiting in the line myself and getting on the bus on the other side and just how, I mean… it really just reminds me of [Jewish] ghettos, of being in these barbed wired spaces were you're smushed together.

Other participants were hesitant to make such comparisons, though references to Holocaust were still evident in their processing of the tour. For example, Benji states:

> I needed to see firsthand what does it mean to be in a refugee camp…you know I'm a descendent of Holocaust survivors and …there are more reasons than any reason possible that the Holocaust and the Shoah had nothing to do with the current state on the ground. But, at the same time, human suffering is unacceptable…Israel is not committing genocide…and there is no racial cleansing and there is no systematic destruction of a people. But, there is human suffering.

While Benji is adamant that the Palestinian experience does not equate with the Jewish Holocaust, his reasons for wanting to understand Palestinians' suffering appear deeply tied to his own family's history of persecution. Participants with a variety of political backgrounds and Zionist identities voluntarily made these sorts of connections between what they witnessed in the West Bank and the Holocaust. However unlike most of the other participants, the non-Zionist, dissenting participants did not relate anti-Semitism and the Holocaust to the need for a Jewish state. As Maggie explains:

> I always thought that it [Israel] was important... but the more I learn about it …it's weird to say, but I'm not sure how important Israel is to everything… Judaism existed for a very, very long time without a country and I'm sure it will continue to exist, it's not like the Jews are isolated to Israel and like if Israel goes away, it's not like Jews are going to go away.

Maggie comes to this bold conclusion after previously explaining how her own identification as a religious Jew, rather than a cultural or ethnic Jew, allows her to hold this position without moral equivocation. As she explains:

> I don't primarily identify as a cultural Jew, I primarily identify religiously… but I would say that people who don't identify religiously, and identify very culturally…[who] go and see that [Palestine], would say, "I think of myself as part of this group of people, and they're clearly just like treating this other group of people so horribly and doing these horrible things," I think that would be very troubling for your Jewish identity. For me, my Jewish identity is tied to religious teachings and morals and that kind of stuff, so for me, it's more, it's kind of crazy to see this group of people that is founded on Judaism doing things that to me seem so against the Jewish faith and against the Jewish teachings.

Maggie's analysis seems to be correct, in that those participants who identified with the "people of Israel" through their Judaism were more troubled by their solidarity with Palestinians than those who saw their Judaism as separate from Israel. For example, Louis, another dissenting, non-Zionist, stated, "I feel absolutely no connection at this point with the government or any of the people of Israel with my own relationship to Judaism…I don't feel like the government of Israel has anything to do with my faith at all." Similarly, Rachel, one of the other dissenting, non-Zionists recounts an experience at a diversity training program, where she wished to correct people about Jewish support for Israel. As she remembers:

> There was this one exercise where you put on the paper whatever it is that you are, your thing, and then you write down what the stereotypes are that people have about you that you wish they didn't have… and mine, I was Jewish, and no one else was Jewish, the students hardly even know what it means to be Jewish except when they see like the Hasidics in Brooklyn, they're like really? Why aren't you wearing a skirt? But I remember thinking about like what are the stereotypes that people have about me because I'm Jewish that I want to tell that not to have, and the main thing that I could come up with was … being Jewish doesn't define how I feel about Israel and Palestine, and I think that that is like probably one of the biggest, like I think one of the biggest stereotypes out there, I think most people in America assume like if you're Jewish then you're pro-Israel.

While Zionism doesn't always correlate with someone's level of criticism for the Israeli state, it does seem to correlate with the emotional turmoil one feels when voicing that criticism, as well as the importance of anti-Semitism in regards to Jewish "safety" and the need for a state. The more important the idea of a Jewish state was to someone, the more difficult it appeared for him or her to emotionally manage his or her criticism of Israel. The non-Zionist, dissenting participants expressed little emotional distress, just as both the supportive non-Zionists and Zionists were fairly comfortable in their opinions. However, the Zionists who held "dissenting," views expressed the greatest level of worry and frustration over their positions. Therefore while people can certainly hold a favorable stance towards Jewish nationalism that "contradicts" their support for Palestinians, it does come at emotional and ideological costs. Perhaps this contradiction though is what gives some people meaning in their Judaism and Zionism, and while it may be difficult, it ultimately serves a positive function for their identity formation.

4. CONCLUSION

Stuart Hall (1994) reminds his readers that in diaspora identity, there is no monolithic sameness, but endless difference, composed of varied personal relationships to a shared narrative and past. The findings of this study illustrate just that, as each participant articulated a unique, nuanced relationship to Israel and his or her Zionist or non-Zionist identity. These relationships are complex, contradictory, and full of entangled emotional and political reflection that can produce valuable resistance to Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

Furthermore, the findings from this study suggest that contrary to popular perception, there is no necessary link between being a Zionist and one's level of criticism towards the Israeli state. Some of the most ardent supporters of the Israeli state rejected Jewish nationalism, while many of the participants who voiced highly critical positions on Israel were adamant about the need for a Jewish state, and often identified as Zionists. This raises interesting questions about the relationship between nationalism and criticism of the state, and how the word Zionism has come to be used and understood by young Jews today. Has the word "Zionist" lost some of its relevance as a label for those who support oppressive policies against Palestinians? Is nationalist identity the major force that binds people to a state, or are there other more dominant forces, forces that are more complicated and latent than nationalism, that sustain individuals' support for a base country?

When one compares the Zionist tour participants who are critical of Israel to the non-Zionist participants who are also critical of Israel, the main difference is not the intensity of their critiques, but their levels of engagement, both in terms of ideological reflection and conventional activism. Interviewees with dissenting views, who did not identify as Zionist, did not offer significantly harsher critiques of Israeli policies than the dissenting Zionists. In

fact, the Zionist dissenters were often even more critical of the occupation and Israel's actions in Gaza than the non-Zionists. Accordingly, the primary distinction between the non-Zionist and Zionist participants with similar political positions is that the non-Zionists tended to see themselves as less active, less concerned, and less knowledgeable about the situation in Israel/Palestine. Rather than a marker of support for the Israeli state, Zionism among American Jews who travel to the West Bank appears to function as a marker of engagement with the region.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that several of the most "supportive" participants did not call themselves Zionists. These counter-intuitive responses trouble the supposed link between diaspora nationalisms and political support for a "base" country, and they complicate the assumed contradiction between Zionism and identification with the Palestinian cause. This finding suggests that diaspora populations are capable of maintaining their ties to a base country, while still holding dissenting views against the state and its institutions. In addition, it also implies that just as individuals are able to see themselves as part of a national collective while espousing sharp criticism of the "base" country, it is also possible for individuals in the diaspora to support the state's policies without identifying with the country's nationalism. In other words, supporting a diaspora state does not guarantee stronger nationalist sentiments, and those individuals who see themselves as part of a diaspora nationalism are just as capable of criticizing the state, as those who choose to dissociate from that national identity.

At the same time however, it is not as if such political dissent coexists harmoniously with diaspora nationalism. Almost all participants expressed some degree of ideological turmoil over apparent contradictions between their Zionism and support for Palestinians. This

distress varied according to the degree of the participant's criticism, coupled with the tenacity of his or her Zionism. As such, tour participants who were sympathetic to Zionism but still held "dissenting" positions seemed to experience the highest levels of ideological turmoil. Likewise, those participants with "supportive" views, as well as those who rejected Zionism, showed significantly less distress over their identities. Therefore, while Zionism may mean something different to Israelis, Palestinians, or outside populations, for young American-Jewish tourists to the West Bank, Zionist identity appears to be most closely associated with a deep and reflective engagement with the situation in Israel/Palestine.

It was this combination of Zionism with a commitment to criticizing Israeli policies and institutions that appeared to not only produce the highest level of identity-based turmoil, but also the highest level of peace and justice activism. Rather than holding conventionally aligned political views and national identities, it was the distress that came from the contradiction of these two elements of one's identity that appeared to compel people to take action: that is, when their diaspora nation acted in ways that were politically and morally upsetting to them. While I do not mean to suggest that this type of national identity is a prerequisite for such activism, as anti-Zionist Jewish activism on Israel/Palestine is vibrant and growing, in the case of Jewish tourists to Israel, such nationalist ties seem to foster continued engagement among more critical tour participants. This suggests that diaspora Jews may rely on Zionism in order to maintain a voice, albeit sometimes a critical one, in the conversation on Israel/Palestine. Without Zionism, it becomes more difficult for diaspora Jews to see themselves as legitimate participants in Israeli affairs, as their connection to the state is strained when the nation is no longer defined to include them.

This implies, as Rodriguez (2003) argues, that it is actually the contradictions in our identities that produce new knowledge, and in this case, new commitments to justice and transnational activism. Rather than stifle engagement, difficulty and struggle in one's diaspora national identity actually sustains one's political involvement with the base country. This finding coincides with Taylor, Levi, and Dinovitzer's (2012) conclusion, that young Jewish tourists often find meaning in their relationships to Israel through the ideological complexities and emotional difficulties that traveling there presents. It also resonates with Sasson's (2010) argument that the rising criticism towards Israel from American Jews is not evidence of their abandoning Israel, but rather an expression of their concern for it. While this thesis does not argue that criticism of Israel is actually an expression of love for it, though for some individuals this may be true, I do propose that nationalist sentiments towards Israel can actually cultivate pro-Palestinian activism, and that often times without this underlying nationalism, diaspora Jews may be more likely to turn their backs on the situation entirely.

In addition to reaffirming the complexity of Jews' diaspora identities, as well as the power of tension within identities to promote activism, this study also sheds light on Singh's (2005) argument regarding the position of oppressed populations' in promoting more just universalisms. Despite the taboo in the Jewish community against comparing Palestinians' suffering to the Holocaust, a range of participants from all nationalist and political positions voiced such comparisons without prompting from the tour guide or interviewer. While a small number of participants discussed the Holocaust in terms of justifying continued violence against Palestinians, a larger number of tour attendees evoked the memory of the

Holocaust to draw connections to their own people's history with the current situation in the OPT.

This findings suggests that, given the opportunity, members of a marginalized, or previously marginalized group, may apply their own history of oppression to current instances of suffering, even when their own ethnic group is the oppressor. Even though there is intense pressure on Jewish tourists to Israel to see the conflict with the Palestinians as an extension of the fight for Jewish liberation, once face-to-face with Israel's brutality towards Palestinians, many participants challenged this narrative by instead seeing themselves as the oppressors doing the "same thing" that was done to them during the Holocaust,

Therefore while in its current condition Zionism has taken on the form of a violent, ethnic nationalism, once removed from the mainstream narrative and confronted with the Palestinian perspective, some individuals are able to experience their relationship to the Jewish state through solidarity with its victims. This suggests that tourism is perhaps an effective way to challenge what Cohen terms "cultural denial," supporting the hypothesis that a single travel experience can cause individuals to reorient their relationship to a nationalist narrative, and move from seeing themselves as the victims to seeing themselves as the oppressors.

A major part of this process is developing feelings of increased empathy, which as seen in the interview responses, is often rooted in an initial process of humanization. Jamie sums up this ideological journey from humanization to empathy to connecting these experiences to one's own history of oppression, when she states: "I was just like, these are people just like us, you know, this could have been us, this *was* us." Not all participants however followed this path of realization on the tour. Many of the "supportive" participants

went through a profound humanization experience and felt increased levels of empathy, but were unable or unwilling to directly relate this to the Jewish people's role in the Palestinian plight. Through methods such as scapegoating radical segments of the Jewish-Israeli population, as well as continuing to see themselves as persecuted victims in need of protection, these participants felt heightened levels of empathy and humanization, but did not implicate themselves in terms of perpetuating Palestinians' oppression. This in turn appeared to lessen their motivation to become activists for Palestinians' rights.

For non-Zionist participants with dissenting views, experiences of humanization and empathy also occurred, however, because they were relatively disconnected from their own identification with the Jewish people as a nation or ethnicity, they also felt less compelled to act, since they did not consider themselves to be a part of the oppressor group. Ultimately, it was those participants who identified as Zionist, or felt a strong connection to the Jewish people, but still maintained criticism of the Israeli state, who were most likely to take action for Palestinian liberation. The tours allowed such participants to gain exposure to Palestinians' suffering in a way that alarmed them of the need to be activists, while simultaneously deepening their relationship to Israel. These participants engaged in the most direct forms of peace and justice activism, despite having the most complicated and contradictory diaspora identities.

While such tours do not seem to reverse or undo national narratives, they work in varied, but consistently powerful ways within those narratives, uniquely affecting different groups and different individuals. For those without a strong connection to Israel/Palestine, they alert them of the severity of the situation, cause them to pay more attention to the media and public events on the region, and give them experiences and opinions to relay in

conversations on the topic. Such participants appear to be the most impressionable, but also the most reserved in their activism. For those who have already engaged in the topic from a critical perspective, the tour gives them facts and anecdotes to back their positions and feelings, and it often motivates them to become or continue to be activists. Such participants organize protests, work in peace-building organizations, and start campus groups to shift the conversation on Israel/Palestine and contribute to the movement for a just peace. They do not necessarily change their opinions like members of the previous group, but they become more deeply involved in the conflict through a process of emotional turmoil that then serves to prompt and sustain their activism.

Finally those participants who come into the tour with less sympathetic views towards Palestinians, report few changes in opinion, but instead experience profound increases in empathy through a process of humanizing Palestinians. On the one hand, this reveals the failure of "humanizing" experiences such as alternative tours to decidedly shift participants' political thinking, as most of the "supportive" participants continue to espouse ideology and engage in activism that support Israeli policies and institutions. On the other hand however, many of these more supportive participants underwent intense shifts in their thinking that manifested themselves in subtle, but significant ways.

Immediately after the tour, participants fill out an exit survey in which they are asked if the tour "changed their perception of the conflict." Daisy, one of the supportive, Zionist participants replied, "Yes, definitely. I got to finally see Palestinians as people and understand their perspective from both an emotional and rational view." She later added in reference to the situation in Hebron, "Shocking! Made me reconsider the entire situation." Though Daisy continues to raise money for the Israeli army and continues to see herself as a

proud Zionist who must stand behind Israel, as she said herself, her blind Zionism is now not so blind. Following the tour, Daisy took a critical eye to her own political views and national identity. Today she carries this reflective approach and increased empathy towards Palestinians with her, whether it is standing up to bigotry at a pro-Israel rally, educating her friends about the hardships that Palestinians endure, or encouraging others to travel to the West Bank. As she explains:

> I think that they [my friends] understand after having a conversation with me, that they might not understand the complexities …I would tell them what's going on there and how Palestinian people are living, having them line up in order to go the mosque, I would tell them about that… And I would tell them, "Just go to Hebron"…I think that one of my friends actually went on the Windows tour through me.... I think that they were shocked, they didn't want to believe. And I didn't want to believe either.

Seeing is not believing. Every participant on the tour saw the same checkpoints, the same wall, the same stories of suffering and oppression, but each walked away believing something different. Zionist identity is not a fragile set of lies that once revealed to be untrue, will crumble as people flock to join the "other side." Instead, such identities, narratives, and nationalisms are deeply rooted in genuine experiences of collective memory and ethnic solidarity that run much deeper than any set of facts. Nonetheless with respect to these identities and their truths, as Said, Rodriguez, and Hall warn us, we must avoid seeing diaspora identities as static, and remember that they are always in process, always in tension. If we fail to remember this, our identities run the risk of falling into essentialist categories that relieve us of our responsibility to change and our responsibility to question our commitments to others and to ourselves. While these tours do not "undo" Zionist identities, they challenge and complicate them in ways that aid in the development of a more inclusive form of Jewish nationalism and greater recognition of Palestinians' rights. They cause participants to question their relationships to Israel, and they promote ideological reflection

that ultimately translates into behaviors and actions that bring us closer to a more just society in Israel/Palestine.

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